

CINEFANTASTIQUE

January 1987

Volume 17 Number 1

\$4.95

CAN \$6.85

UKE3.40

Little Shop of Horrors

**THE CULT PHENOMENON,
FROM '60S B-FILM TO
OFF-BROADWAY HIT TO
BIG-BUDGET BLOCKBUSTER**

STAR TREK IV
A preview of the best yet
and its surprise ending

CAPTAIN EO
Monster steals the show
from Michael Jackson



CONTENTS

VOL 17 NUMBER 1

The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

JANUARY, 1987

4 STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME

A preview of the best STAR TREK yet and the surprise ending that leaves the crew of the Enterprise right where they started more than twenty years ago. / *Review by Eric Duce & Steve Fobert*

7 HYPERSAPIEN

Meet Kirbi, the Trilat, one of the most unusual ETs ever filmed in a preview of effects by Roger Shaw. / *Preview by Dan Scapperotti*

9 CAPTAIN EO

Makeup work by the Burman Studio turns out to be the highlight of Michael Jackson's overblown rock video. / *Article by Ron Magid*

10 JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF EARTH

CAPTAIN EO producer Rusty Lemorande updates Jules Verne in his directorial debut for Cannon Films. / *Preview by Steve Biodrowski*

13 PAUL VERHOEVEN'S "ROBOCOP"

Dutch director Paul Verhoeven gives a tried-and-true science fiction premise an artistic touch. / *Preview by C.V. Drake*

16 LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

A preview of the London filming of Warner Bros \$26 million fantasy musical comedy, and a profile of Howard Ashman, the producer of the smash off-Broadway show. / *Feature by Alan Jones & Dan Scapperotti*

27 THE ORIGINAL "LITTLE SHOP"

This 1960 B-picture featuring a young Jack Nicholson started it all. The creative force behind Roger Corman's charming farce turns out to be its writer, Charles B. Griffith. / *Retrospect by Dennis Fischer*

32 STUART GORDON—THE RE-ANIMATOR

The director whose RE-ANIMATOR infused the horror genre with new blood previews a trio of new productions, FROM BEYOND, DOLLS, and ROBOJOX. / *Director profile by Stephen Rebello*

36 RICHARD FRANKLIN'S "LINK"

A career profile of the director of PATRICK, ROAD GAMES, PSYCHO II, and CLOAK AND DAGGER, and a look at the London filming of his newest thriller, LINK. / *Director profile by Alan Jones*

40 THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE

Although the new series is back, a behind-the-scenes upheaval among its writing staff suggests that network censorship may be encroaching on the boundaries of imagination. / *Article by Ben Herndon*

6 COMING**42 REVIEWS****50 FILM RATINGS****62 LETTERS**

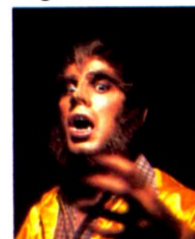
Page 16



Page 9



Page 32



Page 50



Page 4

This is our special issue devoted to the LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS phenomenon. First it was a '60s B-film, directed by Roger Corman and featuring a young Jack Nicholson. Then it became, somewhat surprisingly, a smash off-Broadway musical written and produced by Howard Ashman. Now it's a big-budget Christmas movie from Warner Bros, directed by Muppets' genius Frank Oz. Dennis Fischer provides a glimpse of how it all got started with a Retrospect of the 1960 Roger Corman original. Fischer interviews Corman, Jonathan Haze and Jackie Joseph, the original Seymour and Audrey, and writer Charles B. Griffith, who emerges as the creative force behind this loveable tale of a man-eating plant. Mel Welles, the original Mushnik, explains Corman's importance to the industry as a training ground for new talent and provides an affectionate picture of the wacky free-wheeling *modus operandi* of "the Corman Repertory Company" and how they filmed the picture in just two days for \$10,000.

Dan Scapperotti profiles Howard Ashman, the horror film fan who turned Corman's B-film into an off-Broadway hit that has since circled the globe, and who wrote the script for the forthcoming movie. Ashman explains how he shaped the Corman comedy into a kind of Faustian tragedy that has touched millions.

And Alan Jones provides an on-the-set report from London on filming the Warner Bros Christmas blockbuster. But there is a word of a new, upbeat ending. Instead of Faustian tragedy, apparently the execs at Warner Bros had something more like HAPPY DAYS in mind.

Frederick S. Clarke

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Office Manager: Celeste Casey Clarke. Operations Manager: Catherine Scerba.

COVER PAINTING: Roger Stine. PHOTO CREDITS: ©1986 Cannon Films (10), Murray Close (17,18,19,20,21,24,25,55), Peter Cunningham (61), ©1986 The Walt Disney Co. (9), ©1985 Harmony Gold (11 right), Deana Newcomb (13), ©1986 Paramount (4,5) ©20th Century-Fox Film Corp. (48,57), ©1985 Universal (Peter Sorel 45), Alan Wilson (11 left).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The Burman Studio, Richard Franklin, Steve Johnson, Jack Warford, Kevin Yagher.

CINEFANTASTIQUE MAGAZINE (ISSN 0145-6032) is published five times a year, in January, March, May, July, and September at P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. (312) 366-5566. Second class postage paid at Forest Park, IL 60130. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CINEFANTASTIQUE, P.O. Box 270, Oak Park IL 60303. Subscriptions: Four Issues \$18, Eight Issues \$34, Twelve Issues \$48. (Foreign & Canada: Four issues \$21, Eight Issues \$39, Twelve Issues \$55) Single issues when purchased from publisher: \$6. Retail Distribution: In the U.S. by Eastern News Distributors, 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. (1-800-221-3148). In Great Britain by Titan Distributors, P.O. Box 250, London E3 4RT. Phone: (01) 980-6167. Submissions of artwork and articles are encouraged, but no correspondence can be answered unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Printed in USA. Contents copyright © 1986 by Frederick S. Clarke. CINEFANTASTIQUE® is a Registered U.S. Trademark.

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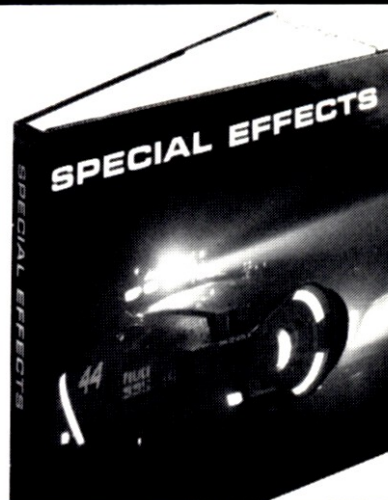
Modern special-effects geniuses are breaking through the old barriers. Yet even they sometimes resort to humble old tricks. *Return of the Jedi* features shots of unbelievable complexity. Yet when the Rebel Forces mass, look hard at the vehicles in the background. Would you believe that some of them are nothing more than sticks of gum and a pair of sneakers?

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STAR TREK IV THE VOYAGE HOME

The best STAR TREK yet winds up right where the TV series left off more than twenty years ago.

*By Eric Duce
& Steve Fobert*

There's an old saying: "You can never go home again." Simply stated, it means you cannot return to "the good old days." STAR TREK IV—THE VOYAGE HOME blows that old saying right out of the water. The newest entry in the legendary STAR TREK series has returned home to the ideas and concepts that made the television series one of the most popular in entertainment history.

Paramount Pictures moved up the film's release date from December 12 to November 26 after a wildly successful sneak preview at the Buena Vista theatre in Tucson, Arizona on September 22. Paramount's market researchers recruited a largely teenage audience by passing out tickets to students coming out of films like TOP GUN the week before. Para-

mount also gave away tickets at the nearby Sahuaro High School. The film screened was in its final form but was a work print without the fully completed matte paintings or effects composites. Christ Stuetze, a sophomore at the school, called the film "the best STAR TREK yet," and confirmed that his fellow classmates gave the film equally high marks on Paramount's questionnaires.

Directed by Leonard Nimoy, STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME reunites all the stars of the popular series: William Shatner as Admiral Kirk, Nimoy as Mr. Spock, DeForest Kelley as Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy, James Doohan as Commander Montgomery "Scotty" Scott, Walter Koenig as Commander Pavel Chekov, George Takei as Commander Sulu, and Nichelle Nichols as Commander Uhura. Also appearing are Mark Lenard and Jane Wyatt as Sarek

and Amanda, Spock's parents, Majel Barrett as Christine Chapel, and Grace Lee Whitney as Janice Rand, a character once written out of the TV series but now also welcomed home.

THE VOYAGE HOME continues the storyline begun with STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (1982). The Enterprise crew is returning to earth from Vulcan to face charges ranging from destruction of federal property (the Enterprise in 1984's STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK) to mutiny. John Schuck plays a representative of the Klingon government seen pressing his case at the Federation for the extradition of Kirk and his crew to stand trial in Klingon courts for the murder of Captain Kruger in STAR TREK II.

Meanwhile, an alien space probe has entered Earth's orbit, emitting a strange signal

so powerful it begins to destroy the planet. The probe's high-pitched sound is determined to be a language produced specifically to communicate with the hump-backed whale, an animal long-extinct. It is believed the probe came to Earth centuries before, when the whale was a predominant species. Now it has returned to talk to them.

The alien probe is never anything more than a bald plot mechanism. It departs earth at the end of the film, as mysterious and unexplained as when it arrived. But it sets into motion Kirk's decision to take his ship and crew back in time to find whales to communicate with the probe and avert disaster. Their adventures in present day San Francisco form the basis of STAR TREK IV and recall some of the better time travel episodes of the STAR TREK TV series.

Gene Roddenberry, STAR

Why STAR TREK IV leaves Lt. Savik stranded on Vulcan

By Dan Gire

At the beginning of STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME, Admiral James T. Kirk hops aboard the rechristened "Bird of Prey" (now the H.M.S. Bounty) and leaves the planet Vulcan with the rest of his gang—all except for Lt. Savik, who mysteriously, remains behind.

No reason is given for her abrupt separation from the main cast, except in the original script where reportedly Savik has become pregnant after romping through the rocks with Mr. Spock in STAR TREK III. A later script revision had Savik stay behind for those all-purpose "medical reasons." At a preview

screening of STAR TREK IV in October, all references to Savik's condition had been excised, leaving viewers to provide their own reasons as to why the shapely 1st Officer had been abandoned by her military peers. Was it her Vulcan breath? Or was the "voyage home" to

It seems Curtis and young Spock didn't just hold hands in STAR TREK III.



Robin Curtis as Lt. Savik.

hard for a female Vulcan to hack?

Other deletions from the new feature included several scenes involving Majel ("Mrs. Gene Roddenberry") Barrett, whose character, Nurse Chapel, has since been elevated to director of all medical services and equipment in Star-Fleet Command. Nearly all of Barrett's scenes—some of them rather large—were reportedly dropped from the final print, an action that the actress openly blasted during a recent Star Trek convention in Chicago. According to Barrett, Chapel's contributions to the film now consist of one line of dialogue and a single reaction shot. □

TREK's creator, has often referred to his show as the human adventure, and although it has taken four movies to get there, *THE VOYAGE HOME* is just that. Screenwriters Nicholas Meyer and Harve Bennett deal in drama and characterization rather than special effects, which were predominant in some of the other films.

It was only logical to have Meyer write the script. After the disastrous *STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE* (1979) it was Meyer's direction of *STAR TREK II* that forged the path the films have followed since. Having never seen an episode of the television series, Meyer brought a freshness to the *STAR TREK* legend and redefined the characters. By teaming with Bennett and *STAR TREK IV* director Leonard Nimoy, Meyer creates a story that blends a new image of *STAR TREK* with the concepts and ideas of the television series.

Where the last two movies were basically vehicles for William Shatner's Kirk, *THE VOYAGE HOME* is more of an ensemble picture. The crew splits up to achieve two objectives: to seek out the whales, and to find the parts needed to fix their ship, nearly destroyed in the time trip. Chekov and Uhura's job is to obtain plutonium from a naval nuclear base to use as a power source for the ship's travel forward in time. Chekov narrowly escapes death when he is severely injured in a chase by naval guards, and is rescued at a naval hospital by his companions. Scotty is in charge of getting the tank material for holding the whales in the ship. The rest of the crew is busy patching up the damaged ship.

Particular attention is focused on McCoy's affectionate bantering with Spock, which is especially touching as we see a special bond of mutual admiration between the two. Catherine Hicks, an aquarium employee who helps Kirk get the whales, provides a love interest for the Admiral. Her friendship soon develops into romance for Kirk, who may very well carry on the affair into the next film, as Hicks joins the crew when they return to the



Mr. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) and Captain Kirk (William Shatner) get more down to Earth in their adventures in *STAR TREK IV*. During their comedic exploits to find whales in present-day San Francisco, Spock learns to swear in the vernacular of the day.

future.

Kirk and Spock end up saving the whales when they are released into the open sea because the aquarium is unable to afford their upkeep. The whales are beamed aboard the ship just as they are about to be harpooned by a Russian trawler.

Leonard Nimoy once stated in a television interview, that due to the overwhelming popularity of *STAR TREK* the actors will probably continue making the movies from their wheelchairs. The surprise ending of *STAR TREK IV* and the fact that William Shatner has negotiated to direct *STAR TREK V*, makes that prediction more likely than ever.

With the alien probe dispatched, the Enterprise crew returns to Federation Headquarters to face charges brought against them for their mutinous actions in *STAR TREK III*. But having saved the day, all charges are dropped—except one. Kirk is found guilty of insubordination, and is happily demoted to Captain. As the crew walks off together they see looming before them a newly-constructed Enterprise—ready for adventure. And that, my friends is where *STAR TREK* began more than 20 years ago. The new film is *THE VOYAGE HOME*, indeed. □

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION Fans irate over plans for new series

By Dan Gire

As *STAR TREK IV* was readied for release in October, Paramount announced that the series will return to television as *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*, timing the announcement to call attention to their slate of syndicated programming. The series is scheduled to premiere September 1987, on the 21st anniversary of the telecast of the original show. On the new show, Gene Roddenberry will serve as executive producer, but none of the original main cast members are expected to return to the tube.

Already *STAR TREK* fans have voiced disapproval of the new program. "It would be a disaster," said Tom Woodward, a Chicago enthusiast. "To bring something like that back just won't work. There's something 'extra' the show had that can never be duplicated. Actually, that 'something' disappeared during the third season. Roddenberry wrote the very last episode and it was really bad. To throw away everything except for the title, well the Trekkies would never accept it. This is like bringing back Lucille Ball."

Another Chicago *STAR TREK* buff, Dave Ellerman,

agreed. "Even the title of the show sounds like bad news. It's like a generic title somebody slaps on an inferior show just to get name recognition. *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* sounds like a Pepsi commercial."

The original series, which ran from 1966 to 1969, was a late bloomer, ranking 52 amongst all series during 1966-'67, its first and peak season. NBC cancelled the series in 1969 because of declining audiences; it was popular among young viewers but not among network advertisers, who were after bigger ratings.

A massive search will be announced soon for performers to play the new characters in *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*. The show will be distributed through Paramount's domestic television division, which means it will bypass the big three networks and go straight to first-run syndication on channels now carrying the original *STAR TREK* re-runs. Twenty-four one hour episodes and a two hour movie are being produced for the series. Paramount, which tried to launch a fourth network before using *STAR TREK* back in 1977, has been mute about details. □

COMING

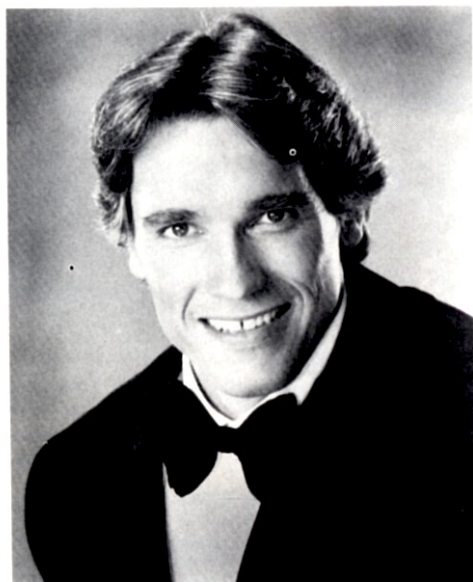
STEPHEN KING'S "THE RUNNING MAN"

Taft/Barish Productions kicks off a slate of big-budget genre films.

By Alan Jones

"No major film production company which has any plans for staying in business for long can eliminate the fantasy genre. Audiences seem to have an undying appetite for this type of film and Taft/Barish have made a big investment as a result." So said 37 year-old Rob Cohen, president and partner in Keith Barish Productions where he has assembled an impressive slate in conjunction with Taft. "We have the financial structure and distribution for ten pictures with Taft/Barish retaining all creative control," he said.

So far, the company's announced lineup includes **THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK**, currently shooting under George (MAD MAX) Miller's direction with extensive devil prosthetic makeup work by Rob Bottin. Ann Rice's **INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE** and its sequel, **THE VAMPIRE LESTAT** will finally make it to the screen too, under Cohen's auspices, as will Truman Capote's **HANDCARVED COFFINS**, Wade Davis' non-fictional zombie tale **THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW** and a live-action version of **THE FLINTSTONES** which could star Arnold Schwarzenegger as Fred Flintstone. Soon to resume shooting though is another Schwarzeneg-



Arnold Schwarzenegger stars as a futuristic cop in **THE RUNNING MAN**, and is up for the role of Fred Flintstone in a live-action film of **THE FLINTSTONES**.

ger vehicle, Stephen King's **RUNNING MAN**, based on the book King wrote under his Richard Bachman pseudonym.

Cohen first entered the industry as a screenplay writer for producer Martin Jurov, but it was as a reader for Mike Medavoy and the International Famous Agency that he started his climb up the ladder of success. Amid a mass of scripts he discovered a project called **THE STING** and since then has never looked back. More recently he co-wrote and directed **SCANDALOUS** and was selected by his close friend Michael Mann to direct two episodes of **MIAMI VICE**.

"Directing always interests me and I will always direct," said Cohen. "But Keith Barish and I have a vision of something special. We want to bring in high-end movies with big stars and no apologies. I respect companies like Cannon, Carolco, and New World, but most of their fare seems to be middle-to-low on the scale of ideas. We want to make a studio's Number One film for that year. I see Taft/Barish like a microwave oven. I can cook ten things in the time it would take me as a director to make one."

The first project Cohen bought

after becoming president of Taft/Barish was **RUNNING MAN**, Stephen King's tale about televised death becoming the major top-rated spectator sport in a futuristic society.

"I bought it with the understanding that we would use King's name on the advertising," Barish said. "To this end I want the novel relaunched without the *nom de plum* prior to the movie premiering.

"To me, the novel appeared to have great potential as an action picture," continued Barish. "It also has something to say in a futuristic context. Without striving for **BLADERUNNER** and the enormity of that production, I hope to get at the crux of where we are going when television and the government become one and the same. The instrument by which the government deflects the populace from concentrating on all the major issues is to return to the Roman Arena.

"**RUNNING MAN** won't be a special effects oriented fantasy *per se*," continued Cohen. "The stunt aspect of the film is far more important. The ideas are special effects ideas in terms of the way video can manipulate life and truth in order to give the public what it wants, or more to the point what the government wants them to believe."

Cohen is very excited about the video debate which is at the core of **RUNNING MAN**. "Video is wonderful but it is also very flexible and therefore extremely dangerous," he said. "If a government truly wanted to do certain things, they could rearrange truths to their own ends by controlling the network. The network really is the villain of the piece here as America's middle class has dwindled to nothing—you are either very rich and part of the media elite, or you are poor and struggling. I don't want the film to be excessively political although in some ways there's no escaping that. It will

continued on page 54

NEW RELEASES

AMERICAN TAIL

Nov. 21

Universal. Directed by Don Bluth. With the voices of: Dom DeLuise, Madeline Kahn.

A new cartoon feature from Don Bluth, the former Disney artist who made **THE SECRET OF NIMH** (1982), one of the best animated features of recent vintage. Backed by Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, it's the story of a Jewish mouse who emigrates to America from Russia in the late 1800s, and lives inside the Statue of Liberty.

RUMPLE-STILTSKIN

Nov. 21

Cannon. Directed by David Irving. With: Clive Revill, Billy Barty, Amy Irving.

The first in a series of live-action fairy tales, see page 14.

SOLARBABIES

Nov. 26

UA/MGM. Directed by Alan Johnson. With: Richard Jordan, Jamie Gertz, Lukas Haas.

Futuristic fantasy from Mel Brooks' Brookfilms, see last issue, page 17.

STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME

Nov. 26

Paramount. Directed by Leonard Nimoy. With: Nimoy, William Shatner, DeForest Kelly, John Schuck.

Reviewed page 4.

GOLDEN CHILD

Dec. 5

Paramount. Directed by Michael Ritchie. With: Eddie Murphy.

Supposedly John Carpenter turned down directing this effects-laden fantasy, starring Eddie Murphy, to do **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA**. Though the trailer makes it look like a comedy, it's a straight action/adventure, with Murphy leading the search for a six year-old Asian demigod who is kidnapped from Tibet and brought to Los Angeles by demonic forces. ILM supplies the fireworks.

KING KONG LIVES

Dec. 19

DEG. Directed by John Guillermin. With: Linda Hamilton, Lance Kerwin.

A sequel to the dreadful Dino DeLaurentiis remake, see page 12.

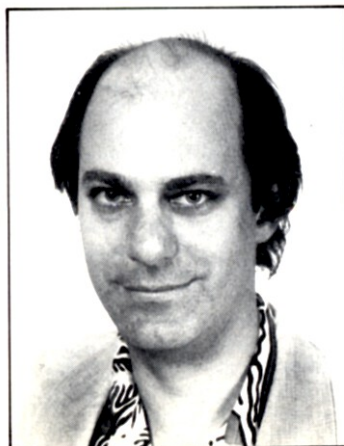
LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Dec. 19

Warner Bros. Directed by Frank Oz. With: Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene, Vincent Gardenia.

The cult phenomenon comes to the screen, see page 16.

Taft/Barish president Rob Cohen.



HyperSapien

Meet Kirbi, the Trilat, one of the most unusual ETs ever filmed, created by effects expert Roger Shaw.

By Dan Scapperotti

Kirbi is a strange visitor from another planet who comes to earth with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal, uh, well actually Kirbi isn't quite a man. In fact he really isn't quite human. He's a Trilat, a stowaway on a starship snatched by a couple of alien kids who want to get a closer look at the green planet their elders have been studying from the far side of the moon. The teenagers' adventures on earth, while their outerspace parents search for them, form the plot threads of *HYPERSAPIEN*, a Taliafilm production scheduled for release next year by Tri-Star Pictures.

While the humanoid alien youngsters can pass as Earthlings, Kirbi presents a problem. Having three appendages, used as arms or legs, and a head featuring three eyes, mouths, and noses, Kirbi is different. Very different. "It will have a warm sort of childlike character to it," said the film's director, Peter Hunt. "Slightly naughty, slightly fun."

Hunt took over the film from director Michael Wadleigh (*WOLFEN*) when production began and found him-



Kirbi at home with his adopted Wyoming family (l to r): Keenan Wynn, Rosie Marcel, Ricky Paull Goldin, and Sydney Penny. Tri-Star plans to release the film next year.

self saddled with a temperamental animatronic star. While Hunt felt the Kirbi design was interesting intellectually, he found himself wishing for something a little more practical during filming.

Roger Shaw is the film's animatronics supervisor, who has the job of making the Trilat work. Several years ago Roger Christian introduced Shaw to art director John Barry. The meeting landed Shaw a job working on the background robots for *STAR WARS*.

Shaw has worked on a number of features since, including Terry Gilliam's *TIME BANDITS*, with Rick Baker for a year on *GREYSTOKE*, supervising the ape mechanisms, and on *INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM*, for which Shaw created an articulated body for the sacrificial scene where it is lowered in a cage into a fiery volcano.

Michael Wadleigh, the original director of *HYPERSAPIEN*, who also penned the screenplay, had a clear idea of what he wanted his alien to look like. Although Wadleigh couldn't draw, he visualized three limbs and the trio of facial features. Shaw was given Wadleigh's one paragraph description of the Trilat and set to work.

"I could see problems right from the beginning because there wasn't any neck," said Shaw, who produced three models of the Trilat for the producers to choose from. "We discussed the models and integrated the best features of each. Ninety-nine percent of

all creatures in science fiction films have got two arms and two legs, a body and a head. Kirbi is zany because he isn't that at all."

One of the many problems to be overcome was Kirbi's ability to walk on three legs. Shaw originally had planned to use marionettes but the weightless effect of those puppets failed to give the creature the necessary credibility so Shaw took another tack.

"I designed a couple of special rigs which we used on location," he said. "They turned out so well we should have also used them in the studio. For a scene where Kirbi walks towards the camera we have the rig behind what you see of Kirbi. A girl, lying on her belly on the rig, has her arms and head inside Kirbi. As long as we kept her and the supports

continued on page 58

Dirt (Ricky Paull Goldin) tries to pry his rifle away from the mischievous Trilat, an ET with three versatile appendages.



Grandpa (Keenan Wynn) meets his card-playing match in Kirbi, who loves games.



TRICK OR TREAT

Halloween mix of horror and heavy metal rock leavened with humor.

By Dan Scapperotti

TRICK OR TREAT—the title dredges up visions of another senseless slasher film. Instead the film is a refreshing satire on the current fashion in the nation's hinterlands to attack rock music, especially the heavy metal sound, as Satanic. The really frightening thing is that the Ayatollahs of Christian Fundamentalism, who have shown a distinct lack of tolerance for other people's religious beliefs, have actually gotten some politicians to listen to them.

The film, released October 24 by DEG—the DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group—focuses on Eddie Weinbauer (Marc Price), a loner in high school who finds solace in rock music. When his hero, Sammi Curr (Tony Fields) dies in a cocaine induced fire, the boy's world crumbles. A local disc jockey, played by rock star Gene Simmons, befriends Eddie and gives him the only copy of Curr's unreleased last album. The D.J. plans to broadcast the record at midnight on Halloween. Eddie plays the record at home seeking "back masked" messages Sammi may have left on the album. Soon the youngster has brought back the devilish Sammi and the terror begins.

Yagher's makeup for Tony Fields as demonic rocker Sammi Curr, who gets burned-up in a cocaine induced fire.



Skeezix, a rod and cable puppet demon built for **TRICK OR TREAT** by Kevin Yagher.

The project came about because Dino DeLaurentiis watched **NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, PART II** which was produced by Joel Soisson and Michael Murphy. The Italian film mogul was looking for a producer for a Halloween horror film and called the two filmmakers. DeLaurentiis told them all he had was a title and a release date.

"We didn't want to do another slasher film," said Murphy, "and we clarified that with Dino. He told us just to go away and make the movie. We met a young writer named Rhett Topham, who gave us the premise of the story, which we wrote into a treatment and translated into Italian for Dino. He approved the story."

Murphy's first thoughts were to have a Heavy Metal star play the Sammi Curr character. "We were anxious to have feedback from the various contacts we'd made—like Ozzy Osbourne, Kiss, Judas Priest, and others," said Murphy. "We got very negative feedback from them. They read the satanic rock star premise as a very negative load to place on them. It seemed to justify what all these religious groups were saying. We didn't want to do that. So we went back and clarified that the danger was blind hero worship, whether it be a heavy metal star or whatever. At the same time we're poking fun at both sides."

Murphy and Soisson were about to sign a director to **TRICK OR TREAT** when a friend told

them that Charles Martin Smith was interested in directing and that the actor had worked closely with Carroll Ballard on **NEVER CRY WOLF** and with John Carpenter on **STARMAN**. They sent Smith a long treatment of the story. Smith flew down to Los Angeles and met with the producers. "He recognized parts of the treatment that we thought were weak," said Murphy. "He had the same sense of humor as we did."

Smith, who has acted in **AMERICAN GRAFFITI** and in the "Banshee" episode of HBO's **Ray Bradbury Theatre**, was handed **TRICK OR TREAT** for his directorial debut. Smith checked his Mickey Mouse watch as he sat down to lunch in the DEG Studio commissary. A plate of spaghetti, a daily staple on the menu (obviously DeLaurentiis inspired), sat in front of the actor-turned-director. Lunch is the only break Smith gets from the rigors of wrapping up production at the DeLaurentiis studios in Wilmington, N.C.

"I was attracted to the film because it was a movie that had a sense of humor, which you don't see in a lot of films," he said. "It has some of the traditional horror movie elements in it, but also the music element, which I like very much. I have to admit that when this came up I started to bone up on horror movies. Steal from the best is my motto."

Heavy metal iconoclast Ozzy Osbourne appears as the Reve-

continued on page 58

STAR WARS IV 'THE CLONE WARS' HAS A FEBRUARY START

Under the usual veil of secrecy, sources close to Lucasfilm reveal that George Lucas is forging ahead with plans to begin production on the next **STAR WARS** film as early as February.

Called **THE CLONE WARS**, the film will kick off the second of three **STAR WARS** trilogies planned by Lucas. The new trilogy will tell the story of a young Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader, detailing galactic history prior to the events in the first **STAR WARS**. A third trilogy planned by Lucas is set in the future, after the events of **RETURN OF THE JEDI**.

Filming is set for locations in Kenya, Morocco, and Switzerland, and on sets based at England's Elstree studios. Lucas is said to be holding a tight reign on the effects work in an effort to keep ILM's expensive and time-consuming post-production work to a minimum.

CREEPSHOW II GEORGE ROMERO SCRIPTS KING TALES

Laurel Productions' follow-up to their successful horror anthology feature began filming in Prescott, Arizona in October. Michael Gornick makes his feature directing debut helming a script by mentor George Romero based on three stories by Stephen King. Gornick has been Romero's cinematographer since **MARTIN** (1978) and has directed episodes of Laurel's syndicated series **TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE**.

Two episodes of the feature filming in Arizona are "Old Chief Wooden Head," about a cigar store Indian which comes to life to do battle with young toughs, and "The Raft," about four college coeds aboard a raft which is engulfed by a sentient slime. "The Hitchhiker," about a supernatural rider, is to shoot in Maine.

George Kennedy and Dorothy Lamour star in the film, which is for New World Pictures release next summer.

Captain EO

Makeup by the Burman Studio turns out to be the highlight of Michael Jackson's overblown rock video.

By Ron Magid

Michael Jackson did the singing and dancing, but it was Anjelica Huston as the Spiderwoman who stole the show when Walt Disney premiered CAPTAIN EO on September 19. The \$15 million Walt Disney/George Lucas production, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, unreels in 70mm and 3-D as a 17-minute attraction only at Disneyland and Disney World.

Huston's H. R. Giger-inspired Spiderwoman makeup is the work of Tom and Bari Burman of the Burman Studios, who did outstanding work on the character of Sloth in last year's GOONIES. "It's very Gigerish," Tom Burman admitted, referring to H. R. Giger, the the Dutch design genius behind ALIEN, but added that the similarity was unintentional. Huston's character is supremely evil in the film, but the Burman's makeup is both surprisingly sexy and strangely beautiful.

Originally, the makeup and other work for CAPTAIN EO was to be handled by Rick Baker, the Oscar-winning makeup artist of GREYSTOKE. But Baker bowed out and recommended the Burmans. Although Baker had submitted his own designs, the production company asked the Burmans to come up with something of their own. They hit upon the Spiderwoman concept and developed the



Anjelica Huston as the Spiderwoman in makeup by Tom and Bari Burman for the Walt Disney/George Lucas production of CAPTAIN EO, a 3-D short filmed in 70mm, currently showing at Disneyland and Disney World.

design.

"Then we went to meet with Francis Coppola and George Lucas," said Tom Burman. "We walked in and put the designs down and George Lucas said, 'This isn't what I want. I already approved Rick Baker's design!' I didn't know! I was kind of taken aback."

Lucas may have wanted to retain Baker's design, but his performers—first Shelley Duvall, then Anjelica Huston—were not fond of having their faces completely obscured in a film where they were to receive no credit. "Duvall was going to play the character originally," Tom Burman recalled. "She came in and looked at the makeup Rick Baker designed and said, 'I'm not going to wear that. I'll have no credit. How will anybody know it's me? You could put anybody up there!'"

Anjelica Huston was brought in after Shelley Duvall balked at playing the part, but Huston was no more willing to have her face totally obscured by a mask than was Duvall. Since time was running out the Burmans pleaded with the production to be given a free hand to come up with something that would make everyone happy, and dusted off their Spiderwoman designs.

The makeup that had created all the fuss, as envisioned by Rick Baker, was a witch-like creation, a beautiful concept, but it covered the performer's entire face. "It was very much like a Medusa," Tom Burman said. "It was much more of a horror makeup, very bold, and very thick." The Burmans adapted some of the elements of Baker's design in their Spiderwoman: the head full of snakes became a headdress of

bio-mechanical cables.

"Anjelica Huston is a model, and she really wanted to be pretty," said Bari Burman. "She never said that, but after we did the appliance she started to get a little shaky about what was going to happen with her face. We understood that she was to be beautiful, and she was happy with it."

Ultimately, Tom Burman's design led to Lucas and Coppola re-thinking Huston's character entirely. Burman felt that since Huston was hanging from a mechanical web, that she wasn't so much a witch

as a spider. Said Burman, "I suggested to Coppola that what we really had, to my mind, was a black widow, a feminine monster. 'God, that's wonderful,' he said. 'We'll call her the Spiderwoman!'"

Building the elaborate body suit that Huston wore during her three day shooting schedule was a fairly complex operation that required the use of sculpted and constructed pieces to create the final look of the character. A headdress of foam rubber duplicated the look of plastic tubing for flexibility. The body suit was fabricated by John Logan out of L100 foam. The fingernails were made of neoprene.

"We put little valves on her breasts," said Tom Burman. "We didn't know if we'd get away with it. Ultimately, we had to reduce the size of her

continued on page 59

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

CAPTAIN EO producer Rusty Lemorande updates Jules Verne in his directorial debut for Cannon Films.

By Steve Biodrowski

Which way to the Center of the Earth?

The uniformed guard at the Long Beach Naval Station refrains from calling the MP's and instead helpfully points to a nearby airplane hangar, which would be inconspicuous enough, were it not for the eight-foot-tall, bat-winged creature standing out front.

The hangar, which stands six stories high and covers the area of four football fields, is being rented by Cannon Films to house sets for their updated remake of Jules Verne's 1864 novel *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH*, which will be released in February. The forty-day shooting schedule began on June 9, with several days on location in and around Newport Beach (doubling for Hawaii) before mov-

Muckluck, a cute, floppy-eared scampering thing, dons some of the explorers' clothes left out to dry.



Paul Carafotes (l), Nicola Cowper & Ian Mitchell-Smith (r) dry out their comic books after accidentally plunging underground while exploring an extinct volcano.

ing into the World War II hangar on Terminal Island, where much of Cannon's *INVADERS FROM MARS* was filmed.

"That's our key grip," joked executive producer Tom Udell, introducing the mutant creature outside the San Pedro hangar. Udell is auditioning local college basketball players to wear this and seven other full-size suits created by Lane Liska to represent a primitive tribe beneath the Earth's surface (the majority of the tribe will be smaller-scale versions seen in the background).

Udell plans to cast a surplus number of performers: "They don't realize how uncomfortable the costume is until they've been in it for a couple of days, so some drop out." But he is also looking for performing ability: "There is acting involved: some people are natural puppeteers—they have a natural fluidity of movement."

Within the hangar, debut director Rusty Lemorande (whose writing and producing

credits include *CAPTAIN EO* and *ELECTRIC DREAMS*) smiles as he sorts through a box full of mechanical bats, choosing candidates for the next day's shooting, which features swarms of bats in an underground waterfall set at Culver City's Laird Studios.

But rocks and wind are awaiting their cue. Lemorande turns his attention to the task at hand: directing an earthquake.

The hangar houses approximately five hundred feet of winding tunnels, an underground lake, and the set being used today: a rock ledge which represents the interior of a dormant volcano.

While a Louma crane follows the action above, four young actors enter the volcano-set and stand ten feet off the ground on a ledge which will later collapse beneath their feet (actually only two rocks off to either side collapse; the main section is lowered on a fork-lift). Their pet dog attracts their attention to a strange small creature perched on a nearby rock.

What is it? A monkey? Well, yes and no. First, it's a radio-controlled puppet built and operated by Liska, with moveable ears, arms, and legs; then it's a hand puppet for shots involving more facial expression; but when the creature, called Muckluck, has to scamper like a monkey—exit synthetic furball, enter spider monkey, with not only a trainer but also its own personal makeup girl to attach ears that

continued on page 53

Director Rusty Lemorande (right), behind camera, lines up a shot for the film.





The Genie and its cloud of liquid nitrogen gas, by Reel Efx of Los Angeles.

THE LAMP

TEXAS GENIE A LOW BUDGET MAGIC ACT

By Les Paul Robley

THE LAMP is a \$3 million independent production of Huston's H.I.T. Films, the makers of THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY, currently shopping for a distributor. The film stars James Huston (THE BOSTONIANS) and Deborah Winters (KOTCH) in a story about teenagers who find a magic lamp when they break into a museum at night as a Halloween prank.

Dr. Warren Chaney, a former university professor of behavioral sciences, wrote the screenplay in 16 days and served as producer. An early career as a professional magician and ventriloquist gave Chaney a basic working knowledge of special effects. "We took the story of Aladdin and his lamp and added a Monkey's Paw twist," said Chaney.

A long prologue to the film establishes how the lamp arrived in Galveston harbor in the late 1800's on board a ship from the Middle East, and traces its path to the museum through a series of owners who can't resist rubbing it, only to befall its terrible curse.

Chaney made available his magician's bag of tricks to the staff of Reel EFX, a Los Angeles-based company that handled the film's many mechanical effects. Reel EFX has been responsible for the special effects in the FRIDAY THE 13TH films, APRIL FOOL'S DAY, and RAISE THE TITANIC.

Some of the staff at Reel EFX go back to the days of George Pal's WAR OF THE WORLDS. Raymond Fielding, former head of special effects for Zoetrope Studios and author of the effectsman's bible *The Technique of Special Effects Cinematography*, acted as technical advisor on the production. He and Chaney would first discuss conventional ways of doing the effects optically, then would kick around alternate low-budget methods for completing those same effects mechanically.

Obviously, the single most difficult effect to make believable was the genie itself, with a body modelled on Arnold Schwarzenegger's. According to Reel EFX crewmembers Gabe Bartalos, John Blake, and Jim Gill, the hardest part consisted of getting the 20-foot tall monster to move with some degree of freedom. With its elongated, fully-articulated arms stretched straight out, the three-fingered humanoid creature was 23-feet wide.

In reality the genie stands only eight feet tall. Its misty bottom was added by means of a liquid nitrogen tank connected below the waist. "The liquid nitrogen gave a nice effect, was non-toxic and didn't smell everybody out of the room like a lot of fog generators do," said Bartalos. "Basically, it's 70 percent of what air is—only much colder. You only have to worry about getting frostbite." □

ROBOTECH

Lagging toy sales stall launch of a new series with a feature film waiting in the wings.

By Joseph Reboy

ROBOTECH, a Japanese science fiction-themed animation series, proved to be a hit for TV syndicator Harmony Gold, fueled by the sale of model kits marketed by Revell. The distributor placed the series, 85 half hour episodes, in 90 U.S. markets, reaching about 78% of the national viewing audience. And the series caught the attention of fans, for the superior quality of its animation, and for the mature themes and characterizations of its dramatic storyline, spanning three generations in a tale of Earth's defense in an interstellar war. But plans to launch a new TV series and a feature film have been delayed. The problem: the toy sales are down.

ROBOTECH is actually an amalgamation of three unrelated Japanese animation series, rewritten and melded together for Harmony Gold by Carl Macek. Serving as the basis of the series was the popular Japanese series MACROSS: THE SUPER DIMENSION FORTRESS, which spawned a feature in Japan called MACROSS '84, DO YOU REMEMBER LOVE. With parallels to the seminal Japanimation series SPACE CRUISER YAMATO, the series follows Rick Hunter—a pilot who grows into manhood fighting an alien menace.

With ROBOTECH's success, Harmony Gold decided to expand. They syndicated another Japanese program, CAPTAIN HARLOCK, but without a strong merchandising base to tie into, it proved difficult to sell to independent stations. Harmony Gold has also produced ROBOTECH II: THE SENTINELS, an all new and all original sequel to their hit series, with a storyline by Carl Macek which, unlike the original series, is not cobbled together from existing shows.

Telecast of the new series has been delayed due to sluggishness in the sales of the toy line which Matchbox has just introduced. Matchbox is coproducer of the new show. Sales have been hurt by the more sophisticated but similar toys from Hasbro for their immensely popular G.I. Joe line. Matchbox hopes to regain some of their lost market with the introduction, hopefully in time for Christmas, of a new line of dolls



Japanimation star Rick Hunter, the lead of Harmony Gold's syndicated series and feature, set during an interstellar war.

called "The Women of Robotech." These will be Barbie Doll scale, with a full line of clothing and playsets, based on the well-defined and humanely portrayed female characters, especially Lisa Hayes and Lynn Minmay, Hunter's girlfriends in the series. Whether or not a young female audience exists for the show only time will tell, but certainly avid male fans will be looking forward to their own, albeit secretly purchased, favorite female characters.

Also facing hard times is Harmony Gold's feature, ROBOTECH: THE UNTOLD STORY, produced at a reported cost of \$8 million. Cannon Films test marketed the film in Dallas in July but has yet to schedule a release date. The bulk of the feature is taken from MEGAZONE TWO THREE, a Japanimation feature which has been entirely rewritten by Carl Macek, with new footage to insert characters from both ROBOTECH series.

But with Marvel making the silly, overdone G.I. JOE and the clunky, incomprehensible TRANSFORMERS, the fans are rooting for Harmony Gold to overcome the latest setbacks. At stake is whether series animation will continue to progress or stagnate at a banal, juvenile level. □

KING KONG LIVES!

Scripter Ron Shusett claims this time DeLaurentiis is doing it right.

By Carole Devereux

Most critics consider the Dino DeLaurentiis remake of **KING KONG** (1977) to be a travesty, especially those with a fondness for the exquisite 1933 original. Apparently so did the public, since the remake was such a resounding flop at the boxoffice that DeLaurentiis cancelled plans for a sequel. But the need for product to fuel his newly acquired studios in North Carolina and his new distribution outfit DEG, has prompted DeLaurentiis to have his Kong once more rear its mechanical head. **KING KONG LIVES** shows up in theatres December 19.

Ron Shusett, executive producer and co-story writer of the original **ALIEN**, and his writing partner Steve Pressfield claim it was the quality of their script that sold DeLaurentiis on the idea for a sequel. "Several attempts were made and several scripts were written," said Shusett. "But Dino wasn't satisfied with any of them. No one would believe that Kong could be restored after falling off the Empire State Building... until I came up with the idea that he would have an artificial heart implanted. And then Dino said, 'Of course!'" The heart is as big as a pick-up truck and is lowered into Kong by doctors using a crane.

Shusett and Pressfield's script, which Shusett calls a "semi-spoof," teams Kong in a love story with Lady Kong, an ape character written with a woman's lib twist on Jessica Lange, the modern woman Kong "fell for" in the remake. "We decided to abandon the romance using humans," said Shusett. "What we did was write in a romance for Kong with another ape, which they find on the island and bring to America. When she kidnaps a handsome guy [played by Brian Kerwin] and falls in love with him, Kong is jealous." One of the worst-kept secrets in Hollywood is that the Kongs have a baby at the end of the film (see 16:3:14).

As for the technical problems of the remake, according to Shusett



Writers Ron Shusett (l) and Steve Pressfield pose next to Kong's artificial heart at the DeLaurentiis Studios in Wilmington, N. C.

one thing the production learned was that the way Kong walked was all wrong. To solve the problem they built armatures as extensions to the mechanical ape's arms. Now, the Apes walk quadruped, like a real ape walks. Shusett said the fact that the mechanical ape didn't work in the remake was a lesson that has benefitted the sequel. "Now, we know that that 'Dummy' can only be used in minor situations," said Shusett. "He doesn't have enough movement."

Mechanical apes for **KING KONG LIVES** have been created by Carlo Rambaldi, who won an Oscar for his work on the remake. That award so incensed stop-motion animator Jim Danforth that he resigned from the motion picture Academy in protest (see 5:2:24).

Playing the apes in suits in **KING KONG LIVES** are Peter Elliot and George Yiasoumi. "They are the men who did the apes in **GREYSTOKE** and the primitive walk of the men in **QUEST FOR FIRE**," said Shusett. "They've made a study of non-human postures and that's all they do. Spielberg has used them as consultants to make creatures look believable."

Shusett considers **KING KONG LIVES** to be on a par with **ALIEN**, a project Shusett worked on with

former writing partner Dan O'Bannon. With O'Bannon, who has since severed the partnership to concentrate on directing, Shusett originally wrote his next project for DeLaurentiis, called **TOTAL RECALL**. The script has undergone subsequent rewrites by Shusett and Steve Pressfield. Based on a story by Philip K. Dick, the film is scheduled to start pre-production with DEG in January.

Dick's story is about a man in pursuit of his identity 100 years in the future at an American colony on Mars. Shusett describes it as somewhat of a futuristic version of **NORTH BY NORTHWEST**. It will be filmed in North Carolina and Italy.

Shusett's other project at the moment is **JANUARY HOUR**, which he said David Cronenberg has agreed to direct. "It's in the vein of **DEAD ZONE**, but not really fantasy," said Shusett, who collaborated on the script with suspense writer Ernie Charles. "It's more like **BODY HEAT** or some of the classic Hitchcock films. It has one very bizarre twist at the end which gives it a strangeness associated with science fiction, but it's not. It's very shocking and controversial, which is what I think attracted Cronenberg. It's not action-oriented like his other films, and there are no special effects."

When asked how he felt about the recent boxoffice success of **ALIENS**, Shusett expressed no regret at not having been asked to write it. "I didn't want to be involved in that," he said. "I don't really like to do sequels. The sequel to **KING KONG** is in a different category."

"It was a challenge to do **KING KONG LIVES**," continued Shusett. "After fifty years, we sought to equal the imagination of the first one from 1933. Steve Pressfield and I wanted to see if we could come up with something fresh enough so people wouldn't just groan and say 'I've seen that all before!' Dino has gathered the best people together and they've done a superb job." □

JAWS '87

JOSEPH SARGENT DEVELOPS NEW SEQUEL

Joseph Sargent, director of the 1970 cult film **COLOSSUS: THE FORBIN PROJECT** and numerous TV movies, has been hired to direct **JAWS '87** for Universal, a \$15 million sequel which will scrap all references to the events in **JAWS 3-D** (1983). The film will be shot, beginning in February, in either the Caribbean or Australia ("to save money" said Sargent) for release July 4.

Universal production chief Sid Sheinberg hired Sargent to develop the film, as yet uncast, with writer Michael DeGuzman. "It will be a serious movie by returning to some of the Benchley book and the Spielberg movie," said Sargent. "**JAWS 3-D** is not even recognized by Sheinberg. He's embarrassed by it. In this film we are taking into account the growth factor—the original audience has grown up." **Bill Kelley**

GRAVEYARD SHIFT

NEOPHYTE DEVELOPS STEPHEN KING STORY

Stephen King gave the film rights to his short story "Graveyard Shift" to George Demick of Pittsburgh-based Brimstone Productions. The story concerns a nightmare encounter between factory workers and malicious rat mutations.

Demick, only 22, worked as an apprentice on George Romero's **KNIGHTRIDERS** after being inspired by **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** to make his own horror films. A 1984 horror video short by Demick won a Teddy (Ted Turner Award) but was so violent that cable stations refused to show it.

King gave the story to Demick while on vacation in North Carolina when he dropped by the set of **MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE** with an intro from Romero. King's story has been expanded to feature length by New York writer John Esposito. And Demick has gained the support of Romero alumni Tom Savini (makeup) and John Harrison (music).

Henry Roll

ROBOCOP

Dutch director Paul Verhoeven gives science fiction theme an artistic touch.

By C. V. Drake

Nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign language film (*TURKISH DELIGHT*, 1972) and a winner of the Los Angeles Film Critics Award for best foreign film (*THE FOURTH MAN*, 1983), Dutch film director Paul Verhoeven might seem an unlikely choice to direct *ROBOCOP*, a commercial science fiction, action-adventure film from Orion.

The screenplay for *ROBOCOP* by Edward Neumeier and Michael Miner is extremely tight, with violence aplenty and satiric digs at the commercialized culture of the not-too-distant future. The film is set in Detroit after new technology of the post-industrial period has rendered the city's auto industry obsolete. In the wake of the changing economy has come poverty, social decay, and crime. When a cop named Murphy (Peter Weller) is killed, he is rebuilt as a powerful cyborg and returns to duty on the streets in his turbocruiser. Phil Tippett is supplying

ED-209, a bumbling police robot that continually malfunctions and falls into evil hands, to be stop-motion animated in post-production by Phil Tippett.



Dutch director Paul Verhoeven.

some miniature stop-motion scenes of a heavily armed but bumbling police robot.

Verhoeven was a movie buff from childhood. Growing up in the Netherlands, he often saw as many as three movies a week. Many of them were science fiction. He particularly remembers *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (1951) and *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* (1956). Verhoeven's *DE VIERDE MAN* (*THE*

FOURTH MAN) is a gleefully lurid, ambiguous, and stylish horror film full of fantasies, intimations of witchcraft, and very black humor.

Verhoeven's only previous English language film was *FLESH AND BLOOD* (1985), a surging, cynical adventure set in the Middle Ages. Even though it was not a commercial success, Barbara Boyle, then Orion's vice president of production was impressed with Verhoeven's work, and recommended him for *ROBOCOP* to Orion president Mike Medavoy. "I think they thought it would be interesting to find out what an artistic director would do with a more straight-forward action script," Verhoeven speculated.

The basic science-fictional theme of *ROBOCOP* is what intrigued Verhoeven. "I would not be able to do a straight action picture without some meaning for me," he said. "It was really the basic idea of losing your life and being rebuilt as a cyborg that attracted me. Murphy is not really alive, yet he's going to look for his own murderers.

"There is a level in *ROBOCOP* that I felt related to my own fears and my own strong interest in what lies beyond death," continued Verhoeven. "The story of *ROBOCOP*, for me, is not too far removed from the theme of resurrection. For the last ten years I've had terrible nightmares about dying and what happens to the soul after falling into the dark pit. I still have three



Peter Weller as Murphy, resurrected as *ROBOCOP*.

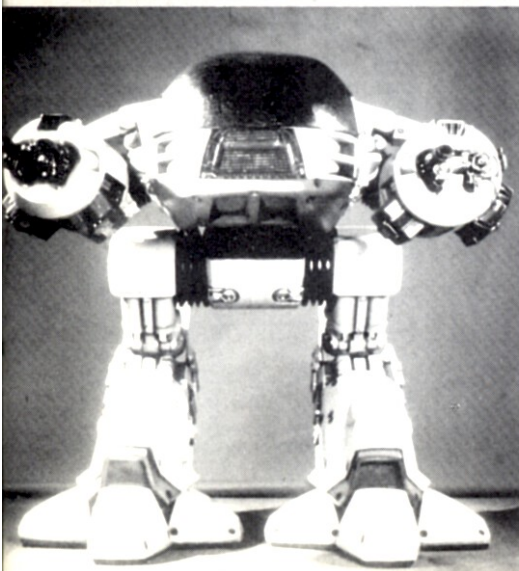
recurring and terribly frightening nightmares about that. It's one of the main preoccupations of my soul, and I don't understand it."

Verhoeven is filming *ROBOCOP* on a thirteen-week schedule which began August 6th, on a budget of about \$10 million. Locations in Dallas and Pittsburgh are doubling for Detroit. "I went to Detroit," said Verhoeven. "It's an interesting city, but the skyline is low. There are a lot of night scenes in the picture, and too much black sky in the frame would be visually uninteresting. Dallas and Pittsburgh will provide a better image of Detroit in the future."

Also appearing in the film is Stephanie Zimbalist as policewoman Lewis, Murphy's former partner, and the only one who recognizes him in his new guise as Robocop. Dan O'Herlihy plays the Old Man, the head of the corporation that runs everything in New Detroit, who plans to renovate the city with a new development called Delta City. The corporation's second-in-command is played by Ronny Cox. To keep order the corporation has developed ED-209, a massive, crab-like police robot which will be animated in post-production by Phil Tippett.

Verhoeven has storyboarded the entire film and plans to use matte paintings only sparingly to create the future setting. The cinematographer for *ROBOCOP* is Jost Vacano, who shot *DAS BOOT*. Verhoeven plans a realistic, fast moving style with extensive use of source lighting. "There will be much more light than in *DAS BOOT*," he said. "The streets of Detroit will have lots of colored light. There will be lots of camera movement.

continued on page 53



RUMPLESTILTSKIN

Cannon Films launches their Movie Tales, low-budget kiddie features filmed in Israel.

By Dan Scapperotti

H.C. Andersen and the Grimm boys will have to move over, here comes Golan, Globus, and Patti Ruben of Cannon Films with their versions of the classic fairy tales. RUMPLESTILTSKIN, their first, goes into wide release November 21.

Going up against Walt Disney and Shelley Duvall would scare off your average filmmaker, but Cannon's associate producer Patti Ruben wasn't your average filmmaker. In fact she *wasn't* a filmmaker. Following a stint with David Suskind, the exuberant Ruben spotted one of Cannon's encyclopedic ads in *Variety* showcasing proposed film projects. She called the studio and landed a job casting one of their films. A self-

Associate producer Patti Ruben.



confident woman with moxie, the 32 year-old Ruben muscled her way into meeting Cannon chief Menachem Golan.

"Golan told me that he had always wanted to film some fairy tales," said Ruben. "He pointed out that we had the whole world to film in, and could shoot in 35mm for theatrical release." Ruben jumped at the project and Golan agreed to leave her on her own for a couple of months while she developed the idea. One of the first decisions Golan made was to make the films musicals, keeping in mind the subsidiary music rights.

The fairy tale features were filmed at Cannon's Israel studios on budgets of about \$300,000. Other fairy tales in the series of twelve films called Movie Tales, are: LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD, THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES, SLEEPING BEAUTY, THE FROG PRINCE, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, THE PIED PIPER, HANSEL AND GRETEL, SNOW WHITE, JACK AND THE BEAN STALK, PUSS 'N' BOOTS, and CINDERELLA. Additional tales planned for the series include ROBINSON CRUSOE and THE GENTLE GIANT.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN is directed by David Irving and stars his sister Amy Irving as the girl who must spin straw into gold. With a limit of \$10,000 per week for star salaries, Ruben offered the project to the director in hopes of snaring his star sibling. Max, Amy's baby by Steven Spielberg,



The Princess (Amy Irving) begs Rumpelstiltskin (Billy Barty) not to take her first-born which she agreed to give him in exchange for spinning her straw into gold.

almost made his film debut as the child of the tale. "But it got too complicated," said Ruben. "Everyone came over to Israel, Amy, Max and Steven, and had a good time filming."

David Irving rewrote the script expanding the story to feature length with input from Spielberg, Amy and others. Clive Revill plays the greedy King, and dwarf Billy Barty plays the imp Rumpelstiltskin. The story has been expanded to fill the 80 minute running time.

"We decided to make a different but similar ending for RUMPLESTILTSKIN," said Ruben. "It involves how Amy learns his name. We decided to have a little girl as the hero. I couldn't afford to bring one over to Israel and local performers couldn't speak English. We didn't want to dub the film, and so, I hit on the idea of making her a mute. This gave us a twist on the plot. She learns his

name from a raven and must force herself to speak."

A lack of suitable locations in Israel prompted the ambitious project of building the sets needed, including a full-scale castle, village and miller's cottage near Jaffa. The elaborate and interchangeable sets will be seen in various guises throughout the series.

Referring to the competition Ruben said, "The big difference between Shelley Duvall's and our fairy tales is clearly that we keep them classical and traditional. I love Duvall's, but they're more flip and more adult. I think adults will love ours, but they're for children."

The original concept for release of the films was as a theatrical Saturday Matinee package, with a new film released every three months. RUMPLESTILTSKIN will be the bellwether for the series and is getting a major release to test the market. □

BOXOFFICE SURVEY: GENRE COOLING OFF, DOWN 36.1% FROM LAST YEAR

An analysis of the 50 Top Grossing Films, as reported weekly by *Variety*, reveals that in the first three quarters of 1986 (39 weeks through 10/1), revenue from horror, fantasy and science fiction films dropped 36.1% from last year's dismal figures, while the boxoffice in general dropped only 2.2%. Genre films only managed to capture 25.1% of the total boxoffice (compared to 38.5% last year).

Summer boxoffice generally boosts the genre, but with 17 less genre films than last year, and lack of heavyweight entries like last summer's BACK TO THE

FUTURE, revenues plummeted accordingly. Of the 327 films that comprise the weekly listings, 83 or 25.4% were genre titles. There were 26 science fiction films (compared to 37 last year), accounting for 8% of all films, and 10.7% of all boxoffice; 31 fantasy films (32 last year), accounting for 9.5% of all films and 7.5% of revenue, and 26 horror films (31 last year) accounting for 8% of all films and 7% of all revenue.

Top-grossing genre films in the *Variety* totals are listed at right (through 10/8). Titles are indicated as horror (h), fantasy

(f), and science fiction (sf), followed by the number of weeks each title made it into the Top 50 listing since January 1. The dollar amounts listed represent only a small sample of a film's total earnings (about one fourth of a film's domestic gross).

Science fiction revenue is down 41.6% from last year, while fantasy revenues look even grimmer with a 50.3% drop-off. Horror, surprisingly, is the only genre category which has increased its revenues over last year by 16%—this in the face of a 16% drop-off in the number of horror films in the Top 50. □

TOP GENRE FILMS OF '86

ALIENS (sf, 12)	\$23,531,726
THE FLY (sf, 8)	\$11,287,200
POLTERGEIST II (h, 9)	\$10,189,068
SHORT CIRCUIT (sf, 14)	\$9,047,953
JEWEL OF THE NILE (f, 15)	\$8,788,758
JO JO DANCER YOUR LIFE IS CALLING (f, 9)	\$6,816,811
FRIDAY THE 13TH PART VI—JASON LIVES (h, 6)	\$5,333,409
HOUSE (h, 7)	\$4,907,243
THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE (f, 9)	\$4,809,598
NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART II (h, 14)	\$4,074,833
PSYCHO III (h, 6)	\$3,936,837
APRIL FOOL'S DAY (h, 6)	\$3,507,309
CRITTERS (sf, 11)	\$3,418,089
BRAZIL (sf, 29)	\$3,380,751
FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR (sf, 10)	\$3,367,757

TYCIN FILMS

Director Tim Kincaid launches ambitious slate of film and video productions for Empire Pictures.

By Dan Scapperotti

Will the video revolution hurt film producers? Despite the pathetic wailings of the MPAA's Jack Valenti, the nation's preeminent purveyor of gloom and doom, the answer is no. In fact video has given a new lease on life to many films which bombed at the boxoffice.

One film producer that has managed to straddle the twin worlds of video and theatrical motion pictures is New York's Tycin Films, headed by director Tim Kincaid. Tycin currently has two pictures in video release through Empire Pictures' Wizard label, *BREEDERS* and *MUTANT HUNT*. And the company recently completed *NECROPOLIS* for theatrical release through Empire, and has another picture, *ROBOT HOLOCAUST*, now filming.

To bring her living-dead minions back from the grave in *NECROPOLIS*, the sorceress (LeeAnne Baker) suckles them at her breasts, makeup by Ed French.

NECROPOLIS is about the reincarnation of a 17th century sorceress brought into the 20th century by a magical ring. Played by fetching LeeAnne Baker, the sorceress is determined to complete the virgin sacrifice she tried to perform before she was burned at the stake. Directed by Bruce Hickey, the film features an eyebrow-raising scene of the sorceress, complete with six breasts, suckling her living-dead minions back to life. *NECROPOLIS* is currently in post production in Rome where Empire does all of its mixing.

Kincaid, until recently, was mired in the depths of low budget independent movie-making with such films as *BAD GIRL'S DORMITORY*. A couple of years ago, while attending the American Film Market, Kincaid strolled into the Empire Pictures suite with



LeeAnne Baker as the sorceress in *NECROPOLIS*, for release by Empire Pictures.

a promo reel tucked under his arm. Empire topper Charles Band passed on the film, but asked to see any future projects Kincaid was developing.

Back in New York Kincaid and his wife, producer Cynthia DePaula, went over about six projects that they had on tap, and sent the material to Band. "A week or two later he invited us back to California," said Kincaid. "At the time everyone was talking high concept so I said let's do *RAPISTS FROM OUTERSPACE*." Band bought the film (released as *BREEDERS*) as well as *MUTANT HUNT*, which Kincaid shot back-to-back.

Kincaid was rewarded with a long term, ten picture deal with Empire in which some of the films will be made under his Tycin banner and others under Millennium Pictures. The latter will include some bigger budget items. Kincaid explained that most of the Tycin features

will be produced for direct-to-video sales probably through Empire's own Wizard Video. The remaining films will see a theatrical release.

Although filmed after *MUTANT HUNT*, *BREEDERS* was the first to land on video store shelves aided by a stylish pulp-influenced poster. Though no censors could get at his script Kincaid did have a domestic overseer. "My wife is very much into making sure that women aren't being ripped-off in these films," he said. "We had a lot of nudity but we weren't brutalizing women on screen. Everything is implied. *Variety* speculated that *BREEDERS* went out on video because of problems with the rating board, but we had always planned to make it an R-rated film. Nothing has been cut for the video release."

The climactic scenes of *BREEDERS* take place in the

continued on page 60



LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Warner Bros gambled \$26 million on this fantasy musical comedy based on the popular off-Broadway show.

By Alan Jones

"On the 21st day of the month of September, in an early year of a decade not too long before our own, the human race suddenly encountered a deadly threat to its very existence. And this terrifying enemy surfaced—as such enemies often do—in the seemingly most innocent and unlikely of places."

Prophetic words indeed as spoken in the prologue of the off-Broadway smash hit musical comedy now turned \$22 million motion picture, **LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS**. Change the month to October, the year to 1985, the place to Pinewood Studios and you have the basic facts behind this production released by Warner Bros. for the Geffen Film Company. Produced by William S. Gilmore and directed by Frank Oz, Roger Corman's revamped seminal cult classic stars Rick Moranis as Seymour, the downtrodden employee at Mushnik's Flower Shop, who nurtures a strange plant, named Audrey II, which develops alarming feeding habits.

Ellen Greene recreates her off-Broadway role as Audrey, Seymour's secret love and fellow workmate. Rounding out the cast is Steve Martin as Orin the dentist, Vincent Gardenia as Mushnik, and 16-year-old newcomers Michelle Weeks, Tichina Arnold and Tisha Campbell as the Girl Rock Group inspired Greek Chorus, Ronette, Crystal, and Chiffon, who have

more important roles than in the play. The voice of Audrey II is realized by Levi Stubbs, the lead singer with The Four Tops. The film also features cameo performances from two of Moranis' contemporaries who, for contractual reasons, have to be kept a closely guarded secret.

On stage it was the team of lyric writer/director Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken who were responsible for turning Corman's most efficient piece of filmmaking into the award-winning affectionate parody of social mores, nostalgic pop music, and '50s monster movies (see sidebar, page 22). Both return for the film version. Ashman wrote the screenplay and the two artists collaborated once again for the three new songs needed to replace the five that had been dropped from the original show. The producers wanted to make sure that the movie runs only a spare 90 minutes in order to leave audiences begging for more.

The songs that have been dropped are "Ya Never Know," "Closed for Renovation," "Mushnik & Son," "Now (It's Just the Gas)," and "Call Back in the Morning." These were the songs that were judged to be either star turns in the truest musical comedy tradition or theatrical bridges for scene changes, neither of which were needed for filmic purposes. The three new songs, which Frank Oz wanted written to add more rock 'n' roll guts to the proceedings are: "Some Fun Now," "Mean





Rick Moranis as Seymour has a spirited discussion with Audrey II, the man-eating plant of Warner Bros' **LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS**, which opens December 19. The non-human star of the film, created by effects expert Lyle Conway, sings "Mean Green Mother," one of the film's new songs.



SEYMOUR & AUDREY of stage and screen. Above: Lee Wilkof as Seymour and Ellen Greene as Audrey in the off-Broadway stage version of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*. Left: The film version recasts Greene as Audrey with SCTV star Rick Moranis as Seymour.



Green Mother," and the ballad "Your Day Begins Tonight" which may or may not be used over the end credits.

Other key members of the *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* team include plant designer Lyle Conway, John Landis' favorite director of photography Robert Paynter, veteran musical film editor John Jympson—he cut *A HARD DAY'S NIGHT*—and choreographer Pat Garrett, whose last film was *SANTA CLAUS—THE MOVIE*.

In production for over a year now, *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* started soundtrack and playback recording under the auspices of musical director Robby Merkin and ex-Four Seasons back-up singer and producer Bob Gaudio in August 1985 prior to shoot-

ing on Pinewood's 007 stage in October.

Production designer Roy Walker turned the largest soundstage in the world into Skid Row, complete with a working elevated railway system, fire escapes, sleazy tenement blocks, an authentic New York skyline and the exterior of Mushnik's floralemporium. Although slated to complete principal photography in March of this year, both Geffen and Warner Bros were so high on the rushes, a further 16 weeks were allotted to get everything just right and put the finishing touches to all the key areas of performance, exact lip-synch and plant action in an effort to ensure that, in producer Bill Gilmore's words, "*LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* will be the *MARY POPPINS* of the

the film's script, he was not closely involved with the production, according to Gilmore. "Ashman's not interested in a film career," said Gilmore. "He kept in touch with Oz, but geographically he was cut out of the production because he was working on a new show called 'Smile.' But he knew he was always welcome."

Gilmore admits the film, created totally within the confines of the soundstage, could have been made in any studio in the world, but Pinewood was chosen for three reasons. "Firstly, when we started filming the pound was under a dollar ten," he said. "Secondly, the 007 stage is the largest facility that could have comfortably housed our major set. And thirdly, and probably the most important of all, a tremendous pool of animatronic technicians and puppeteers has sprung up here in the last ten years."

Despite its major special effects trappings and initial genre roots, *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* is still a musical first and foremost and as such presents a major marketing headache. When was the last time a musical with this sort of budget made any money at the boxoffice? Gilmore is only too aware of the challenge. "Here we have an old-fashioned book musical in the traditional sense with 14 visual vocalists singing on screen and very little dancing," he said. "I know this type of film is out of vogue, but essentially it's the music and lyrics that tell the whole story."

"Unfortunately modern day kids think a musical means a film like *FLASHDANCE* or *FOOTLOOSE*," continued Gilmore. "The communicative edge of the script isn't *MEAN STREETS*, but it isn't *SUPERMAN* either. *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* is unclassifiable really. There's music, comedy, outrageousness, a crazy plant—in fact the whole film is a send up of other movies."

Early in his career, Gilmore worked on *WEST SIDE STORY*, and said the extended shooting schedule on *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* wasn't unusual for a musical. "Especially one with a man-eating

'80s and this year's *E.T.*"

When the film version of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* was first announced, the names of Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, and John Landis were bandied about in conjunction with the project. That was before Gilmore came on board as producer. "I believe they fell out over the deal," said Gilmore, who, as a production executive for the Zanuck/Brown company, oversaw every aspect of the making of *JAWS*. "I don't think David Geffen wanted to just give it away to super-powered luminaries like those."

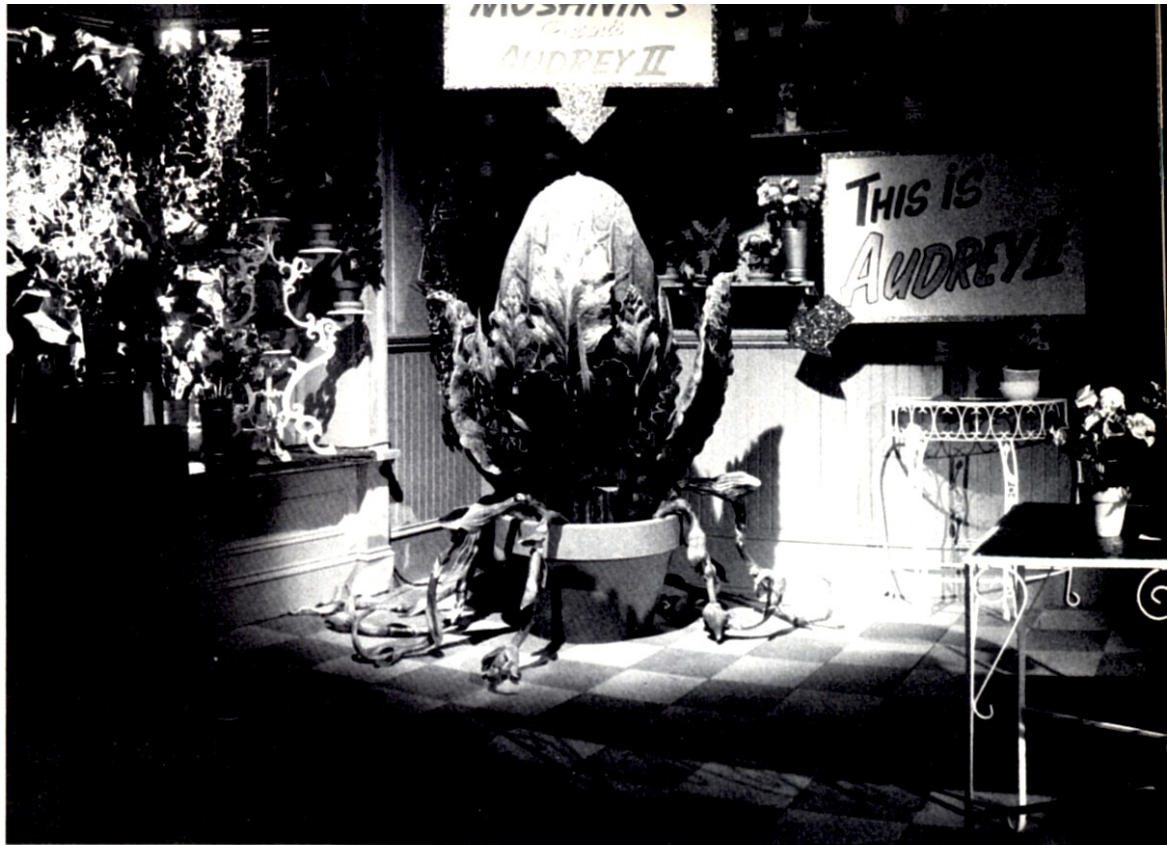
Gilmore was approached by Geffen to produce while Gilmore was producing *WHITE KNIGHTS* for director Taylor Hackford. Frank Oz had already been pegged to direct. "He was a natural choice," said Gilmore, "considering his association with Jim Henson and the Muppets." Gilmore and Oz, both Americans, made sure the London filming didn't Anglicize the New York ambience of the play. "The British crew had no idea what New York's skid row was like," he said.

Though stage producer Howard Ashman contributed

plant!" he laughed. "It grows from 15 inches in height to the size of the Empire State Building. In lip-synching the plant we became pioneers. We had to because although they did a fabulous job with the plant in the show, by taking it to film, audiences naturally expect more. It's yet another challenge for the industry like the one I faced when we made *JAWS*."

Any idea of location shooting was vetoed early on according to Gilmore. "The realism that comes from shooting on location is really fighting what we are trying to do here," he said. "This is a movie about a plant that sings and eats people. That's dumb. It just can't be real, so it had to be stylized. Frank Oz has a phrase he keeps using on this film—heightened reality. This is not a cartoon but just a little bit removed from reality as we know it. It really is a fine line. So every shot in *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* was designed and lit for a soundstage, which is rare these days."

Gilmore found the whole history and concept behind the *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* project had a remarkable impact on him in his capacity as producer. "I still find it incredible that a little play which worked so well on a small stage has become this massive production," he said. "But then I suddenly realized



Audrey II, the fourth of seven distinct stages in the plant's metamorphosis, created by Lyle Conway for the Warner Bros film, on the set of Mushnik's Flower Shop. This stage (also shown page 17) required 12 cable operators to make it come to life.

that the jump from show to film was nowhere as big as the initial jump from the original film to Broadway. When the fact hit me that a bad C-picture-turned-cult movie which had been shot in two days had become a show that nobody disliked, I realized we would have a hit on our hands. I honestly believe that more people will see this film on its opening night than saw the play in the

four years it has been running. That is the power of film, the reason for the budget and why everybody is so committed."

So Ellen Greene cooks like Betty Crocker. Well, she certainly doesn't look like Donna Reed. In her costume as Audrey, complete with blonde wig, tight low-cut black dress and leopard skin stiletto

heels, Ms. Greene looks like every red blooded male's idea of the perfect fantasy female. She played the role of Audrey for two years on stage—18 months in America and six months in London's West End—and every key member of the film version agrees that if she hadn't reprised the part on celluloid, there would have been a full-scale war.

Although Ms. Green had

So much for being faithful to the spirit of the play!



Stage writer/director Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken (right).

It wasn't as if the test screening in Orange County played badly. In fact, the family oriented audience stomped and cheered throughout the first half of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, giving each song a round of applause. But when Seymour and Audrey died in the closing reels there was wholesale shock and dismay. Rick Moranis and Ellen Greene created characters that proved so endearing, the audience was shattered by such a downbeat ending.

So much for the screenplay and songs recreated for the film by Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken,

which brought the play to life, downbeat ending and all. In a panic, Warner Bros put *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* back before the cameras for two weeks in September. The cost for a new, happy ending—\$2 million.

In the process of reshooting, Warner Bros added Jim Belushi to the cast. Inserts were filmed allowing both the hero and heroine to be reunited, alive in the end. However, a top and tail sequence bracketing the film as a dream was vetoed as a well-worn cliché.

The reassembled cast and crew, despondent about the

corporate decision to reshoot, got their morale boosted by the ever-ebullient Frank Oz, who directed. Thoughts that the charm and offbeat wackiness of the original Roger Corman movie and the tried and proven boxoffice appeal of the smash hit musical would soon be betrayed were stilled. As musical director Robby Merkin noted of the transition to film, "it has to be allowed to be translated and to evolve into something with a new validity."

Warner Bros plans to preview both endings side by side before a final decision is made. □



Filmed entirely on soundstages at London's Pinewood Studios, production designer Roy Walker recreated New York's skid row, complete with working elevated train.

made the role quintessentially her own, it is very rare in musicals to have the original cast members, responsible for any success the show may have had, to automatically transfer to the big screen. Ellen Greene said she never even thought about it. When John Landis was set to direct, Greene was told the role was hers. She met Frank Oz through her sweetheart Marty Robinson, who designed Audrey II for the stage, and was asked to do a screen test.

Rick Moranis had already been cast as Seymour, so Greene rehearsed and sang "Somewhere That's Green" with Moranis for the test. "They wanted to know how I could handle lip-synching," she said. Two weeks later Oz phoned to say she had the part.

"I just screamed," she said. "I had really wanted to do it so badly. So did a lot of other name actresses. I was proud of what I had achieved on stage with Audrey but I was convinced they would go for a name. But what is a name? I have one just like everyone else."

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS is not Greene's film debut. She appeared in **NEXT STOP GREENWICH VILLAGE** and **I'M DANCING AS FAST AS I CAN**. But it was the stage role of Audrey that changed her career. "The Broadway show had no money behind it when we first started

but it triumphed on love, dedication, silliness and fun," she said.

Audrey is first glimpsed in the film in a slow tilt upward from her high heels as she walks down skid row. "I'm supposed to look vacuous," said Greene. "Vacuous is a very difficult thing to put across. I don't have any trouble with the sexy wiggle when I walk. My brother always used to say that it came naturally."

Under Oz's direction Greene has changed her performance in the film. "On stage you have more control," she said. "On film you have to get closer and see inside the character more. I'm competing with myself. I'm convinced people will say, 'Well, she wasn't as good as she was in the show, and vice versa. I'm seriously considering going

to China when the film has its premiere!"

Although Seymour's role in the film has been enlarged, Audrey's has remained the same. But Greene has no regrets. She is excited about a dream sequence being added to her rendition of "Somewhere That's Green," set in Audrey's fantasy dream house.

"The film has all the heart that was at the center of the show," she said. "LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS isn't like anything else—it never was and it still isn't. Just when you think you are going to laugh, you cry, and vice versa. The songs were never conceived as songs but the hearts of the characters. I didn't expect to feel as warm, as loved or as comfortable with the film, but I do because I've always

carried the spirit of Howard Ashman with me throughout this great period in my life. Only now I carry the spirit of Frank Oz with me as well."

Ashman's screenplay for **LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS** is much more Seymour's story than the stage play. For example, Seymour isn't adopted by Mushnik as in the show. The change is mainly for cinematic reasons, according to Rick Moranis, who plays Seymour. "It's the nature of film, as it needed a stronger point of view," he said. "On stage an audience cuts to where they want to look. On film the director does it for you. The beats that grab a theatre audience aren't needed anymore because the camera is right in your face."

Moranis shot to fame thanks to **SECOND CITY TELEVISION**, Canada's answer to **SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE**. In the show, Moranis and Dave Thomas created the duo of Bob and Doug McKenzie who so caught the public imagination that MGM offered them the movie **STRANGE BREW**. Moranis followed this cult success with **STREETS OF FIRE**, **GHOSTBUSTERS**, and **CLUB PARADISE** in which he played various types of jerks, nerds, and sleazeballs. But he doesn't feel the role of Seymour fits into any of these categories.

"Seymour is on the nerd spectrum true enough," said

Effects expert Lyle Conway works on the adorable second-stage version of Audrey II on the set of Seymour's apartment for the scene where the plant first comes to life.



Moranis. "But he's more of an innocent—a schleppe, but an innocent nevertheless. I'm playing the part realistically because although everything is basically cartoony, for Seymour it's real. The most important aspect is that I like the character, therefore the audience will too. He has to go through quite a bit you know, he has a lot on his mind!"

Moranis' talent for singing was such a closely guarded secret that even members of the production didn't realize he could until he was offered the part based on his obvious physical and comedic similarity to Seymour.

"I had a few musical numbers on SCTV and at one stage I was in a rock band," he said. "Before The Beatles burst on the scene anyone growing up in Canada seemed to want to be a hockey player. After The Beatles everyone wanted to be a singer. I wanted to be an electric guitar playing goalie!"

"My performance was put together with the aid of electronic equipment," continued Moranis. "It wasn't as if I woke up one morning and sang the whole soundtrack, it was the work of a lot of people. So far it is my voice that they have been using! Although I did things vocally that surprised me, I doubt if I'll become a full-time singer."

Seymour, of course, has the most interaction with the jive-talking plant Audrey II. And it was very time consuming as Moranis explained. "Up to now I've only worked with the ten-inch model and the four-foot one," he said. "We are going to extreme limits to be on the same plane and be in the same frame as there is no split screen or back projection work here. The models are there with me so I can touch them. It isn't like GHOSTBUSTERS where I was being chased by nothing. All effects work is problematic and time consuming but that's the nature of the beast."

Moranis doesn't have any of the newly penned songs to sing. But he doesn't feel he has missed out on the chance to make one of the songs truly his own. "The sound of the songs have been changed to make them more cinematic," he said. "Suddenly Seymour has turned

into a two minute 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' in opening it up from a six-piece band number to one with full orchestration. And that's enough for me really. What I love about the songs is that they all sound so familiar and accessible."

As a moviemaking experience Moranis will never have it better than LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS. And he knows it. "After STRANGE BREW, which was a huge hit in Canada and a medium failure in America, I made STREETS OF FIRE which I felt was too good an opportunity to turn down," he said. "What I was promised was very different to what I got scriptwise and it turned out to be a nightmare. After that I realized that although the final product was important, if it was taking months out of your life, it should be a good experience."

"I did GHOSTBUSTERS because all those guys were my friends and I knew it would be fun," he continued. "Now I'm being more picky and if necessary I will go back and do my own stuff rather than choose a film role just for the sake of it. You have to commit too much to a film part and if it's not pleasant, it's horrible. I go home from the LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS studio at night saying to myself, 'It's going too fast, it's the best and it will be over soon.' Actors can work all their lives and never get as good a role as I have with Seymour."

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS was musical director Robby Merkin's first off-Broadway show. The fact that it has gone the distance, and more importantly that he has gone with it, is like a dream come true for the 34 year-old Merkin. "When I arrived at Pinewood and took my first look at the fabulous Skid Row set, I had tears in my eyes," he said.

Merkin has written songs for Ann Reinking, and arranged and conducted a revue of songs by Carole King called "Tapestry." He became involved with LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS when a friend dragged composer Alan Menken along to a showcase Merkin was con-



Vincent Gardenia as skid row florist Gravis Mushnik, posing with his meal ticket.

ducting for possible production on Broadway. Although Menken and Merkin had played in a band together while they were at college, they had lost touch. So it was with some surprise on Merkin's part when Menken rushed over to him after the performance to say he wanted him to score his next show.

"And when I heard the demo tape," said Merkin, "it knocked me out. It was just a piano and voice at that stage and it has been my role to translate the music into continually different forms. There were twenty songs at first and I was instrumental in getting those cut down into positive choices for the stage. I've always seen the material as flexible clay to be molded. When I was asked to join the film crew, I was completely prepared to re-think it all again."

As it was Merkin's first film though, he really didn't have any idea what this would entail. "My first meeting with Frank Oz went along the lines of 'Could this song be made longer,' and that continued through song after song due to the possibility of a camera cut needing more time. Also we were working on an enormous set, so you musically had to justify getting from point A to point B whereas on stage that didn't even enter into it. Often the lyrics were rich with images to suggest what the eye couldn't see. In almost every case I had to insert extra music which was frightening as the songs had proved themselves from my standpoint."

"The challenge was monkeying around with a proven structure because the bottom line was that the music needed to

continued on page 24

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

THE OFF-BROADWAY HIT

Horror film fan Howard Ashman talks about making Roger Corman's B-film a musical comedy phenomenon.

By Dan Scapperotti

As a teenage horror fan in Baltimore, Howard Ashman caught Roger Corman's *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* on television. The film's bizarre intrusion of comedy into a horror setting made a lasting impression on him. Years later Corman's three day wonder was to have a telling effect on Ashman's career.

By 1981 Ashman had become the artistic director at the WPA, a New York theatre group. He and his collaborator, Alan Menken, had just finished their first play, a musical based on Kurt Vonnegut's *GOD BLESS YOU MR. ROSEWATER*. Ashman struck on the idea of doing a monster movie for the stage with a '50s wall of sound beat.

"*LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* stuck in my mind as having a central villain that was musical, that could sing," said Ashman. "It was Audrey Jr. in the movie, Audrey II in the show. I thought that the character might work as a puppet on stage."

He contacted Corman's New World Pictures and found that it was relatively easy for the WPA to secure an option on stage rights to the film. "I think the people at New World thought we were a little crazy because some people in France had optioned to make the play a couple of years before and that play never saw the light of day." Although Ashman never conferred with Corman directly, he did meet the film director



Howard Ashman, who turned Roger Corman's B-film into an off-Broadway hit.

when he attended a performance of the play.

Menken and Ashman set to work in earnest in September, 1981 and had completed the book and lyrics in November. Their collaboration went so well that only a few changes were initiated before the play went into rehearsals the following March.

Preliminary work on the show gave it a Brechtian slant

and a few songs they wrote sounded like "The Three Penny Opera." Said Ashman, "We decided right away to really work with the sort of Faustian undertones of the story, the mythology that the story is really based on—the little guy who sells his soul to the devil." "I felt that the original movie fell apart about half way through where it just descends into a lot of silly chase sequences

and doesn't make a lot of sense."

The original songs written for the play were far more serious than those which were eventually used. One day Ashman was listening to some old Phil Spector records and was impressed with the base beat, which to him sounded like it belonged in a horror movie. This became the tone of the musical pieces that Ashman calls "a Spector wall of sound rhythm."

"From there it became very natural to create a Greek chorus of street urchins who were Chrystal, Ronnette, and Chiffon (named after girl groups of the early sixties) and the whole '50s musical icon suggested itself at that point."

A ballad which Audrey sang in the shop called "We'll Have Tomorrow," a spoof of the "One Hand, One Heart" song in "West Side Story," was cut in rehearsals because the director felt it stopped the action, in his view the second act could only stand one ballad, which turned out to be the splendid "Suddenly Seymour."

Another Audrey number, "The Worse He Treats Me, the More He Loves Me" was designed as a spoof on an old Chrystals hit "He Hit Me and It Felt Like a Kiss," but was dropped before the show went into rehearsals.

"Some people pointed out that the song made it seem that Audrey being beaten by someone was actually funny," explained Ashman. "It was a deli-



Ellen Greene poses with effects man Martin P. Robinson's version of Audrey II created for Howard Ashman's off-Broadway musical comedy.

cate issue to deal with the fact that she is an abused woman. When you look at it in realistic terms, even though this is a fairy tale, it could have caused interpretation problems so we took it out and replaced it with other things just so our point of view on that was very clear. We hated and detested the guy who was doing this to her and Audrey hated him too."

His adaptation from film to stage was a question of bringing all the elements in tighter focus, a tighter composition. Ashman pointed out that in the original film Audrey isn't dating the dentist and no one is beating her up. And that was the problem; she didn't have one. The introduction of the sadistic dentist furnished the heroine with a dilemma and gave Seymour a human adversary.

Ashman killed off different people in the show than die in the picture. "The people in the

show who die are closer and closer to Seymour," he explained. "They are more and more important to him. The dentist is a villain in the show, in the movie he's not, but in the show we don't blame Seymour for what he does. The second person to die is Mushnik. We like him a little bit better. The third person is Audrey, and, of course, in the film she doesn't get anywhere near the plant. So the last person to be sacrificed is the person Seymour loves best, and then *his* life is over. It was a question of escalating the stakes for him, to make his predicament more and more intense and to make the audience feel more and more ambivalent as to what is going on and that's how you get pulled into the story.

"I think that is where the original movie is lacking," continued Ashman. "I think the movie is a wonderful thing having been made virtually over

night for 50¢ and the amount of talent that went into pulling something like that off just boggles the mind. But the stage is a very different medium and I felt the story had to be more coherent. The use of music needs some stylistic reason for being there."

The play opened at the WPA off, off-Broadway in May 1982, scheduled for a one month run. The rave reviews that accompanied opening night generated interest from the Schubert Theatre organization which, along with David Geffen and Cameron MacIntosh, commercially optioned the play. The show moved to the Orpheum Theatre on July 22, 1983 where it still holds sway over excited audiences. The good notices were followed by a host of awards including the Drama Critics Award, the Drama Critics Circle Award, Outer Critics Award, and the presti-

gious Drama Desk Award. Ashman's *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* also garnered a Grammy nomination.

Ashman wasn't concerned with reaction to the tragic, downbeat ending of his show, which he refers to as "a cautionary tale, a fable which says that if you do these things, this will happen." He recalls the warning in the show's last song, "If we fight them we still have a chance. So no matter what they offer you don't feed the plants." He points out that the finale is appropriate in light of the fact that he was dealing with the genre of '50s horror films.

"I love scary movies," Ashman confessed while admitting his knowledge of horror films wasn't as complete as Marty Robinson's, who designed the show's puppets and was responsible for some of the icons on stage such as the copies of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*

continued on page 54



THE CHORUS of street urchins in the film (left) and play (right) which sing '50s musical interludes that bridge scenes in the story, a kind of rock musical Greek Chorus. The urchins in the film (l to r) Ronette (Michelle Weeks), Crystal (Tichina Arnold) and Chiffon (Tisha Campbell), are said to play a larger role in the story. The play featured (l to r) Jennifer Leigh Warren, Leilani Jones & Sheila Kay Davis. The names of the singers were patterned after '50s rock music groups.

serve two purposes," continued Merkin. "It had to stand alone so it was attractive to listen to when heard on a soundtrack album and it had to support the visual more strongly than the stage show. It was exciting because just as I felt a song had been pushed to the limits, I had to find ways of making it rise to a new level."

In general tone, Frank Oz wanted to intensify the Rock 'n' Roll and de-emphasize the musical comedy elements of the show. And according to Merkin, Oz was right. "We were all concerned how the musical comedy would translate to film," said Merkin. "It is so much larger than life. Such an exaggerated medium would

have looked sappy and silly in unchecked translation. Frank Oz thought that more Rock 'n' Roll would be equal to more general gutsiness and as there was to be so much action in the film it would be another way of validating it.

"Some songs were slowed down, others were made faster," continued Merkin. "Skid Row/Downtown has been changed quite radically, the lightness has made way for a more basic rhythmic feel designed to move the action along in a way to make up for the visuals as we have an entire set to cover in the course of it. The back beat we've added now makes the opening more like a Shangri-Las song.

"On stage the opening title song was a short throwaway introduction designed to capture your attention," continued Merkin. "In the film we had a technical problem in that it has to play under the opening credits. The question was how to make what was essentially a little piece of fluff longer without it sounding like it had been stretched too thin, so we slowed that down too."

One of the reasons why the show was such a popular hit was because it had a lot of charm. In tampering with the basic formula, could this charm be lost? Merkin doesn't think so. "There was a unique balance in the show between pathos, humor, drama, and charm—and that balance has definitely shifted in the film," he said. "The humor has needed to be less punctuated because everything in the film

is evidently bigger, so therefore the charm has been made more low-key which makes you work a little harder to get at the guts. I can only hope we have achieved this.

"One facet of the film that guarantees a little more charm is that the music is prerecorded with the advantage of performances being made more intimate with close-ups," continued Merkin. "Ellen sings 'Somewhere That's Green' on stage in a full, loud voice but on screen she can whisper it and really sing it right next to you. If that doesn't increase the charm quotient, I will be surprised."

The new song especially written for plant Audrey II, "Mean Green Mother," mainly came about because the film was in danger of becoming too menacing during its latter stages according to Merkin. "The Muppet-type plant in the show was fine, but in the film when Audrey II eats someone it looks quite realistic," he said.

"For that reason we all decided a new song was needed for the plant to show it had a great deal of regret after all the mayhem.

"Mean Green Mother" is very much an old-fashioned, up-tempo song like "Willie and the Hand Jive" in the style of Bo Diddley," continued Merkin. "It's fast and funny, with two verses giving the plant a chance to be threatening for 12 bars each before it breaks out laughing. The goal here, like the production of all the other songs in fact, was to go for an authentic period feel in the basic underlying rhythmic structure together with a contemporary consciousness."

As Howard Ashman and Alan Menken's representative on the film, Merkin found himself in rather an interesting position. "I'm supposed to fight for everything they wanted based on discussions we had together back in New York," he said. "But the fact is that I've had to live with the evolution of the film and often that doesn't

"Feed me!" says Audrey II. Lyle Conway adds a dollop of stage blood to the third-stage version of the plant.



Rick Moranis as Seymour Krelboined, whose plant makes Mushnik's shop famous.



put me in anybody's camp because basically I'm on the film's side.

"Sometimes when I think Frank Oz is wrong, I do battle with that as well," continued Merkin. "But he is a man of extraordinary generosity and has made a point of staying in touch with Howard Ashman even though some of the decisions Howard had heard about struck him as wrong. I've done my best at allaying their fears because both still visualize the film as just a celluloid version of the show."

"I've had to stress to all parties involved that although the point of the film is to preserve the original intent and integrity of the show, it has to be allowed to be translated and evolve into something with a new validity," continued Merkin. "The most rewarding sign of this was when we came to shoot 'Skid Row/ Downtown.' None of the actors involved had ever had any contact with the show and had never heard the song any other way. They all loved it so much and their response was so universally positive, I couldn't have been happier. I don't think anyone knew how much that moment meant to me. We've all had fears about turning the show into a movie but that convinced me we were on the right track."

In another multi-million dollar film fantasy, it's yet another interview with animatronics expert Lyle Conway. Or that's how it seems. The ubiquitous Conway has earned himself a considerable reputation for creating the complex creatures on a number of well respected movies like RETURN TO OZ and DREAMCHILD. Now LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS would seem to be the pinnacle of his creative accomplishments. But when Conway accepted Frank Oz' offer to work on the film in March 1985, he thought it would be a relatively routine exercise.

"Doing THE DARK CRYSTAL was nothing compared to this," said Conway. "When I decided to accept the film I thought, 'Oh, it's only a plant.' Everyone knows what a plant



Moranis takes Audrey II to an obnoxious skid row disc jockey played by John Candy to get publicity for Mushnik.

looks like and I knew it wouldn't be a case of having to mold 28 different heads for a character which was the case on the Henson movies. I thought it would be no big deal. But it turned out to be a huge job as everything had to be sculpted, even the leaves, while extensive research and development was needed to develop the hide of the largest plant and the cables that activated the vines."

Oz and Conway had a number of initial meetings to discuss what the plant should look like in all seven stages of its filmic growth. "At first it started out looking like the stage plant—softer and more Muppetey," said Conway. "But I worked up some maquettes which were more realistic and not so much threatening as '50s monster movie-ish. I really wanted to go in the opposite extreme and be more like a Paul Blaisdell creation in say, INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN, with big veins and giant brains but at the same time still be appealing."

"I looked at books on Venus Fly Traps and eventually incorporated textures and colors from the many trips I made doing orchid research at London's Kew Gardens," continued Conway. "The look had to be more stylized because it had to be real enough to be at odds with the sets but enough

of a caricature to have its own personality. It was a musical comedy we were making after all."

Conway explained in detail the look in each development stage of Audrey II. "Each size had to have enough of a different look to give the audience new information to hold their interest," he said. "First there is there is just a little shoot which takes elements from a rosebud utilizing basic mechanics. The second is more or less the same size as the first, with a more desirable look to it—a quality that Seymour, and the audience, couldn't resist. I styled the lips on Ellen Greene's plant likeness for that reason."

"As Audrey II starts off

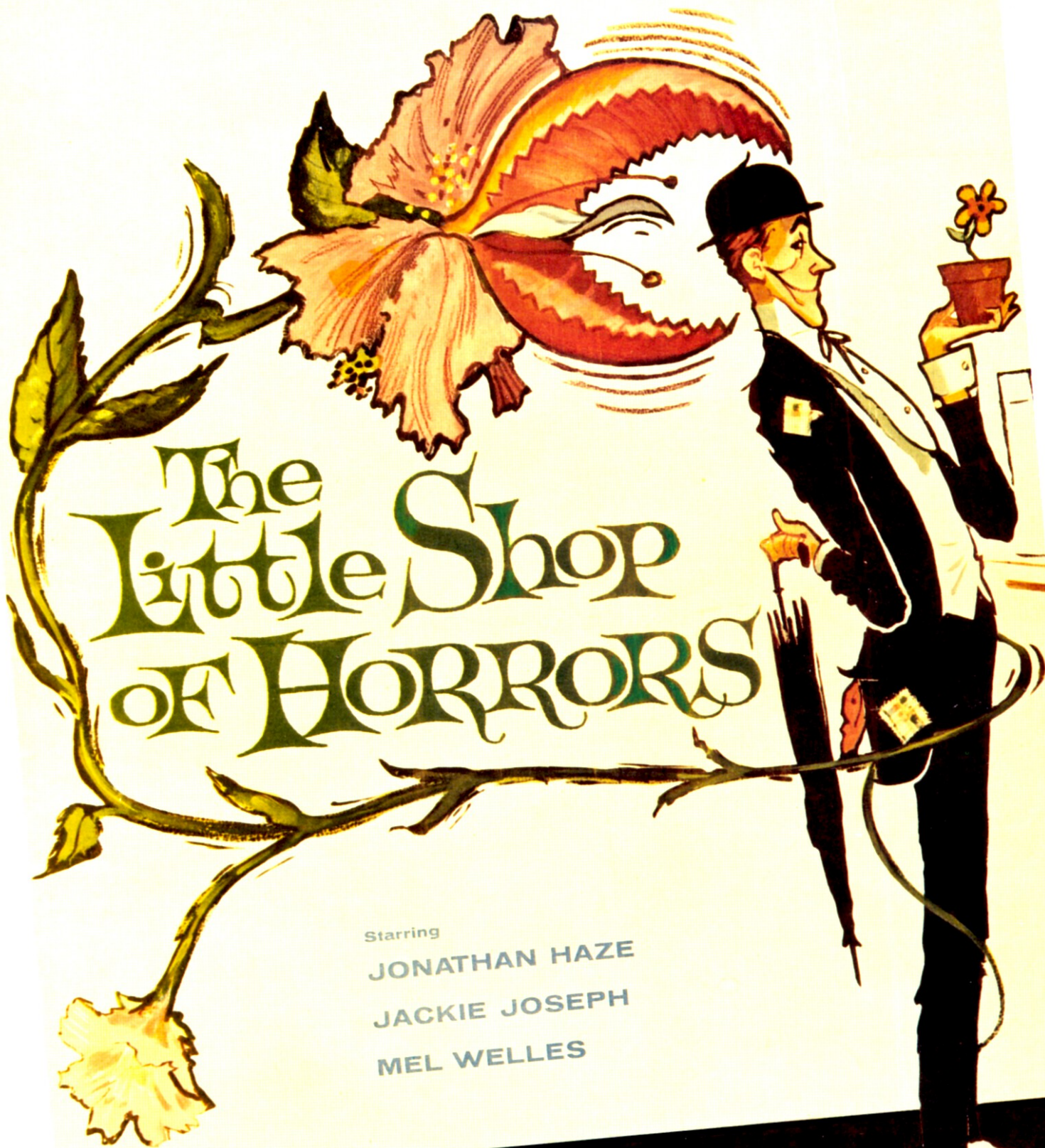
younger and more fragile looking than in the show, I felt that the idea of a baby bird in a nest would be the best approach," continued Conway. "I toyed with designs for this and went to flower shops to see what plants most appealed to me. What did were those little cacti with colored grafts on them. So I took it further and made this model more like an Easter or Faberge egg with sweet pearlescent colors and a precious jewel-like character."

"It's a beautiful, intricate puppet with a mechanism inside the pod and a stem less than a 1/4 inch thick which everything had to run through," continued Conway. "Four

continued on page 55

Ellen Greene with Muppets genius Frank Oz, who directs the film for Warner Bros.





Starring
JONATHAN HAZE
JACKIE JOSEPH
MEL WELLES

Produced and Directed by ROGER CORMAN

Roger Corman's LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

The creative force behind the charming little B-picture that started it all was actually its writer Charles B. Griffith.

By Dennis Fischer

Although producer/director Roger Corman is known as many things—a maverick independent producer, an astute businessman, a parsimonious employer, an innovator, founder of New World Pictures, and director of the most famous of the Edgar Allan Poe series—*LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* remains his best-known and perhaps best-loved film.

Famous, though innaccurately so, as the film that was shot in two days ("and looks it," observed some critics), *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* is far from the best directed of Corman's features. In order to film the main interior scenes which comprise the bulk of the film, Corman's most innovative contribution was to borrow the multi-camera technique pioneered by Karl Freund for *I LOVE LUCY*. Corman used two cameras and pre-lit the sets. As a result, the main unit cinematography by Archie Dalzell is flat and dull. Pictorially, the film looks as low-budget as its skid row location, though some have speculated that that is part of its charm.

One of the key, overlooked figures in bringing together the various participants in the production of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* is its star Jonathan Haze. An actor from Pittsburgh who studied in New York, Haze was working in a gas station on Santa Monica boulevard when he was hired



Mel Welles as Mushnik and Jackie Joseph as Audrey admire Seymour's horticultural discovery, which he dubs Audrey, Jr. Roger Corman's 1960 B-film about a man-eating plant was made for only \$27,000 and inspired the hit off-Broadway musical.

by director Wyott Ordung for a bit part in Corman's first feature as producer, *MONSTER FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR* (1954). Ordung had come into the station to buy gas. Haze grew a mustache and played a Mexican deep sea diver.

"Roger and I became friends ... well, not really friends," said Haze. "I'm not sure anybody ever has been Roger's friend. And he started using me

in all the pictures after that. Roger started using a lot of people he'd met through me—Dick Miller, Bruno Ve Sota, Chuck Griffith, and Bob Campbell. They were all people I had brought in to meet Roger for various parts in pictures I was in."

One of the key people that Haze introduced to Corman was Charles "Chuck" Griffith, who had hoped to break into

show business as a lyricist and had tried his hand at writing screenplays. Corman was impressed with Griffith's ability and speed. Griffith went on to write such films for Corman as *GUNSLINGER*, *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD*, *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS*, *NOT OF THIS EARTH*, *THE UNDEAD*, *NAKED PARADISE*, *BUCKET OF BLOOD*, *CREATURE FROM THE HAUNTED SEA*, *BEAST FROM THE HAUNTED CAVE*, *ATLAS*, *THE WILD ANGELS*, and *DEATH RACE 2000*.

Griffith is the largely unsung creative force behind *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, so much so that some of his friends have almost come to regard the film as "Chuck's home movie." Not only did Griffith write the clever, satiric screenplay, he was also responsible for directing the second unit material, and did the voice for Audrey Junior—the film's infamous man-eating plant whose utterances of "Feed Me!" have become the film's most memorable and oft quoted lines.

The singlemindedness of Audrey Jr., perhaps one of the most absurd names for a monster ever concocted, is part of the film's charm. This low-budget disaster is not scheming to take over the world but is merely hungry for some flesh and blood, and every line emphasizes that one fact. Corman originally intended to per-



Left: Mushnik (Mel Welles) arrives at his shop after spying Seymour feeding a diminutive Audrey, Jr. the night before. Also seen is flower-eater Dick Miller. Middle: The plant has mushroomed to its full size. Right: A dazed Mushnik is beset by teeny-boppers wishing to buy flowers for their homecoming float as writer Chuck Griffith does a walk-on.

form the role of Junior's voice himself. Griffith supplied the plant's lines on the set, but when Corman considered the cost of dubbing the lines, he decided to stick with Griffith's delightful readings.

Griffith also appeared in the film as a hold-up man (designated Kloy Haddock in the script), as an extra in one scene, and a screaming patient in another. His grandmother, Myrtle Vail, played the hypochondriac mother of Seymour Krelboined. (Vail and Griffith's mother Donna Damerel co-starred in the first radio soap opera, "Myrt and Marge," back in the '30s.) Griffith's father, Jack, played the drunk seen in the dentist's chair.

According to Griffith, *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* got its start with *BUCKET OF BLOOD* (1959), a film that resulted when Corman challenged Griffith to come up with a script using leftover sets from

DIARY OF A HIGH SCHOOL BRIDE, which included a sordid apartment and a beatnik coffeehouse. (Griffith inventively added a studio lumberyard as an additional but inexpensive location).

BUCKET OF BLOOD is one of the few films to chronicle the beatnik era and was an unusual combination of comedy and horror. It gave Dick Miller his best role as busboy Walter Paisley who dreams of being an artist and succeeds by turning corpses into sculpture, a gimmick borrowed by such later films as Curtis Harrington's *GAMES* and Martin Scorsese's *AFTER HOURS*. Griffith had ghost-written material for Lord Buckley, the most famous of the Beat humorists noted for his lively and inventive use of "help" language, and used that as the basis for the character of Maxwell Brock (played by Julian Burton), the pretentious, pompous, and unconsciously humorous "artist-in-residence" at the coffeehouse.

"We got applause on the set during the reading of the beatnik poetry," said Griffith. "That got Roger very excited. It was the first time anybody had ever liked anything, so we had to do it again right away. We sat down during shooting and he insisted that it had to be the exact same picture, scene for scene, with just some of the names changed and so on." Griffith got paid \$800 for both scripts.

Corman remembered the origins a bit differently, and said that *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* was done some time after *BUCKET OF BLOOD*, and not right away as Griffith suggested. Once more, there were some leftover

sets.

"My brother Gene [Corman] had been making a movie," Corman recalled, "and he had a leftover set he'd rented. There were still two days he had the use of it for. So I said, 'Let me have it!' And I bet him I could make a movie on that set in two days. I got together with Chuck Griffith and we spent one night, from around seven until about two in the morning, just ducking in and out of Hollywood coffeehouses, and by the end of that time, we had our story. The next morning we rounded up some friends and family. We rehearsed for three days and shot for two."

Griffith does remember touring the coffeehouses or "gin mills" with Corman to work out the plot. One concept centered around gluttony with a chef serving up corpses. "The analogy was, I would shoot out a skeet and he would shoot it down until finally one of them got through, which was the variation that was made," said Griffith. "I don't remember all the different ones."

Dick Miller also remembered *LITTLE SHOP OF*

HORRORS arising out of *BUCKET OF BLOOD*. Corman had offered him the lead. "Noted Miller, 'I was very artistic in those days. I said, 'I just did that picture, I don't want to do it again.' I thought there was no sense in repeating. I said, 'Let Jackie [Haze] do it,' and I'll do something else, anything else in the picture.'" Miller played Burson Fouch, a hipster into eating flowers.

Mel Welles, who played the gruff Gravis Mushnik in the film, also tied it to *BUCKET OF BLOOD*. Welles had long been a close friend of Griffith's and had established a career as a minor character actor, appearing in 56 feature films including *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE MUMMY*, *THE SILVER CHALICE*, and *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV* when not working on things like *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS* and *THE UNDEAD* for Roger Corman. Griffith had written the part of the coffeehouse owner in *BUCKET OF BLOOD* for Welles, who was unable to do it. Likewise Griffith tailored the Mushnik role for the actor.

Writer and director Charles B. Griffith (left), star Jackie Joseph (center) and Merri Welles huddle next to a kerosene heat lamp for warmth during second unit filming.



Producer and director Roger Corman circa 1960 when the film was made.



"He used expressions that I actually used in real life," said Welles. "I added a Sephardic Jewish accent so that it wouldn't sound too Old Yiddish. It was really a piece of cake, even though I had to do something like 98 pages of dialogue in two days. But I had a photographic memory, 100% recall, and since the part was tailor-made, I was able to respond quickly."

As members of what was laughingly referred to as the Roger Corman Repertory Company, Welles, Griffith, and Haze would hang around Schwab's drug store and go to movies together. The company consisted of anyone willing to put up with Corman's low pay and abysmal working conditions. Haze, for example, earned \$400 for his starring role in *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*. But Welles remembers the period and the work with fondness.

"Corman played a significant role in many people's lives at that time," he said. "If you were a beginner coming in, Roger was a step into professional acting and films, and if you were a seasoned actor who wasn't working, who was 'at liberty' so to speak, it gave you something to fill up your time usefully and the ability to contribute something. I don't want to minimize his importance to the industry. He touched a lot of people's lives."

Another member of Corman Rep was Jack Warford. Because of his stoic quality he was cast by Griffith as Frank Stoolie, Sgt. Joe Fink's sidekick in the film's parody of *DRAGNET*. Wally Campo as Fink and Warford play their characters with clipped speech, no expression, no emotion, no nothing. Even when Stoolie mentions about the death of

one of his kids, Fink returns a monotoned "Those are the breaks." Warford worked previously on *GHOST OF THE CHINA SEA*, which was written and produced by Griffith for Columbia, and later appeared in bit parts in *MAROONED*, *DR. HECKLE AND MR. HYPE*, and *SMOKEY BITES THE DUST*.

Recalled Warford, "*LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* was born on a picnic table in a campground at Idylwild. After the unemployed actors in our group collected their unemployment insurance, by Wednesday we'd leave town and we would go camping for the weekend. It was on one of these occasions that Corman wanted another comedy/horror spoof. It was originally titled *THE*

PASSIONATE PEOPLE-EATER. Griffith cast most of it, all except Jack Nicholson and John Shaner—they were in one of Dick Corey's acting classes with Corman."

Nicholson's early appearance as the masochistic dental patient Wilbur Force is now legendary. Shaner was effectively unnerving as the skid row dentist who seems to enjoy his work too much, telling patients behind in their payments, "You're going to get it."

Nicholson followed the script as written but in such a creepy, crazy, maniacal way, he milks every ounce of humor from what could have been a rather distasteful bit. (For example, the masochist seems about to be reaching orgasm as Seymour, pretending to be the

dentist, starts to drill. When Seymour stops, Nicholson gives an outraged shriek, "Oh don't stop *now!*")

This short segment has proven so popular that it has been excised by film collectors from many prints of the film. Nicholson became a star with *EASY RIDER*, but *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* shows that the talent was there years before. He never approached the same heights of all-out inspired lunacy until his role as Jack Torrance in *THE SHINING*.

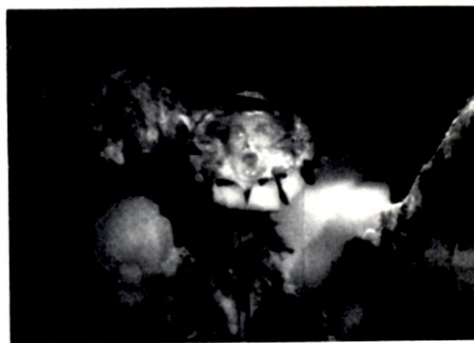
Griffith's 106-page script closely resembles the final film, right down to describing the signs in Mushnik's shop: "We don't letting you spend so much," "Lots plants cheap!" "Come in, just *looking* is alrite."



Merri Welles as hooker Leonora Clyde and Jonathan Haze as Seymour in a 2nd unit sequence directed by Charles B. Griffith. In this dream sequence, later cut from the film, the plant's victims reappear in bizarre ways to haunt the guilt-ridden Seymour.

Left: Dental patient Jack Nicholson in the waiting room reading "Pain" magazine. Middle: Seymour (Jonathan Haze) poses as the dentist to Nicholson, who eyes the corpse of the real dentist (John Shaner) with some suspicion. Right: Nicholson's broad smile when leaving the office testifies to a satisfied customer, playing the masochist to the hilt.





Left: At the climax of the film a new blossom sprouts on Audrey, Jr. after Seymour has climbed inside to hide from the police. Middle: Unable to find Seymour, Mushnik (Mel Welles) and cops Jack Warford and Wally Campo (l) join society dame Lynn Storey at the shop. Right: The blossom opens to reveal the surprised face of digested Seymour.

The sign on the shop itself misspells the name as "Mushnick," an oversight on the part of art director Daniel Haller.

The interiors were filmed at the Chaplin Studios, and the actors kept basically to the script, though Dick Miller and Jonathan Haze would often ad lib in Corman's pictures, adding personal touches. "A lot of the comedy was spontaneous," said Haze. "We'd blow scenes in order to get a chance to redo them. If you kept going and finished, it'd be in the picture, but if you blew it in the middle you could start over and get a second shot."

One gaffe left in the film occurred when Jonathan Haze was pulling Jack Nicholson's teeth. The dentist's chair Nicholson was sitting in was just a prop, and as Haze was bending over, he slipped and fell, knocking the chair over. Corman cut the scene just as the chair begins to tilt.

Actor Mel Welles, who also produced the film's second unit work, with writer/director Charles B. Griffith.



"We would just do the entire sequence from beginning to end," said Warford. "Do it once or twice. Corman was usually happy with it. It didn't seem to matter if something went wrong, we would just keep rolling and finish the sequence. I blew my lines, for instance, I just dried up. The script girl just gave me the line and we just went on from there."

"We did very quick rehearsals and we shot it," said Miller. "One take was it. You were either clear on one camera or the other. When you're shooting with two cameras, you're never really clear. You're always behind somebody on one camera or the other, so there's a lot of strange shots in there when you see the picture."

Jackie Joseph, who played Audrey, was cast by Corman while she worked in New York. Joseph recalled of the filming that the wardrobe room was in a carpenter's booth. She also remembered that at one point she thought that her eyebrows were looking a little bushy, so she decided to ask makeup man Harry Thomas about it, since he was a professional. He told her, "You're the first lady I've ever done. I've only done monster movies." (Joseph decided to touch-up her own eyebrows).

Since *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* represented only two days of shooting out of dozens of pictures that Corman made, it is not surprising that he cannot recall much of what transpired at the time. However, he did smile and say, "LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS was the only movie I worked on where the assistant director came over before the first day's shooting was through and said we were already hope-

lessly behind schedule."

Changes from the script, except for the largely ad-libbed second unit work, are mostly minor. Griffith ad-libbed a line about it being Friday the 13th in his role as the hold-up man, tying it to one of horror's most famous dates. The main differences were the trimming from the script of a scene where Seymour is haunted by the plant's victims, which would have involved some relatively costly process work; and the addition of a sequence where the plant absurdly hypnotizes Seymour and he goes out and kills hooker Merri Welles. (Mel Welles' wife who tagged along on the second unit shooting). Welles introduces herself as follows: "Hi, I'm Leonora Clyde. How's the rain on the rhubarb?" perhaps the oddest of many lines in this decidedly strange film.

The second unit work took two weekends to complete, thereby extending the picture's two days of studio work to closer to the six day schedule that was Corman's practice. The second unit was directed by Griffith, produced by Welles, photographed by Vilis

Lapenicks, with Bobbie Coogan (Jackie Coogan's kid brother) hauling the generator, and Jim Dixon (later, manager of The Byrds) as the sound man, though he only worked one day, requiring that the rest of the second unit material be shot without sound. Jack Warford tagged along to help out.

"We were in skid row day over into night," Griffith recalled. "We got most of our help from skid row. We gave bums 10¢ a shot to act in the picture. We got all kinds of good stuff. We got 15 minutes of picture for \$1,100, which was not too bad, especially since the whole picture cost \$27,000."

Bobbie Coogan played the bum in the railroad yard who gets run over by a train and becomes fodder for the plant. Mel Welles had arranged for the location. "I got the Southern Pacific Railway yard, a train, and a crew to drive it," said Welles. "They backed it up so that when it was printed in reverse, it looked like Bobbie Coogan was hit. We shot all night in the yard and it cost two bottles of Scotch. The same day 20th Century-Fox had

Mushnik (Mel Welles) plugs his ears as policeman Frank Stoolie (Jack Warford) takes a shot at Seymour during his escape through the World's Largest Tire Yard.





Audrey (Jackie Joseph) cheers up Seymour (Jonathan Haze) about his sickly plant.

spent \$15,000 for use of that yard. That was my *coup de gras* as a low-budget producer."

Lapeniek's cinematography is archetypal film noir with pools of light among shadowy streets and alley ways, parodying the hard-edged tone that Wally Campo's narration as Sgt. Joe Fink gives to the film. Also interesting are the almost surreal locations Griffith came up with, such as the World's Largest Tire Yard and another yard full of toilet fixtures. Griffith gained access by promising to put the signs for each prominently in the film; however, Corman decided that the signs should be cut.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS works largely because the characters and the humor works. While some critics have seen Seymour Krelboyn as a Jerry Lewis clone, the character actually goes back to the theatre roles Haze had played on stage. "Seymour is a character I developed over a long period of time," said Haze. "I'd play dumb gangsters. I'd developed the 'dumb' thing and I'd used it several times before."

Seymour's key note is "I didn't mean it." He's a well-intentioned screw-up who can't even trim a pair of gladiolas decently and is something of a klutz besides. But he is never vicious nor mean, treating his daffy hypochondriac mother well and, in a somewhat charming manner, gets his hopes up for a kind of shy romance with Audrey.

"No one thought much about the method," said Jackie Joseph of the acting. "We were not into thinking motivation.

We just played it straight, and that made for good comedy. We just rushed full tilt to get the picture done."

Joseph went on to become a semi-regular on **THE DORIS DAY SHOW** and appeared in such films as **GREMLINS** and **GET CRAZY** (both times as Dick Miller's wife). Joseph plays Audrey with such charm that it is unfortunate she was not given more roles as a comedienne. She delivers an almost steady stream of malapropisms in the film as if they were natural—"Why don't you give him a chance to resurrect himself;" "I'm so hungry, I could eat a hearse;" she identifies a salad as "Caesarian."

Much of the film's humor seems to be based on Yiddish theatre, particularly the character of Gravis Mushnik, who constantly mangles the language in an amusing manner with marvelous delivery by Welles, with lines like: "What

am I, a philatelist? I am going so broke I can't even afford water for the flowers. I should give you a cut rate? To my throat I would be giving a cut rate;" when asked if the plant has a scientific name, he says, "Yes, but who could denounce it?;" and "It's a finger of speech." Welles plays his part broadly, but that's the tone of the film and he milks every bit of humor he can from his reaction scenes. He's a frustrated dreamer with a sense of irony.

The character of Mrs. Shiva (Leola Wendorff) underlines the film's origins in Yiddish theatre and Catskills comedy. Mrs. Shiva is Mushnik's best customer due to an endless stream of relatives she has who are dying. The name comes from the Yiddish term *Shivah*, a rite where mourners sit for seven days in the home of the deceased. Welles recalled that the humor was misinterpreted as anti-semitism by some distributors, which delayed the release.

The music for the film by Fred Katz was an offbeat jazz score lifted from recordings of Katz' work on such Corman vehicles as **BUCKET OF BLOOD** and **WASP WOMAN**. Played by only five musicians, the score works well in the film and was recently released on Rhino Records, with Charles Griffith adding in a few gratuitous "Feed Me's."

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS did not prove to be an outstanding success when released as the second half of a double bill with Corman's



Seymour is aghast as Audrey, Jr. gulps down the hand of its first victim, a bum Seymour saw hit by a train.

LAST WOMAN ONEARTH. "You could say it was a surprise, or a disappointment," recalled Corman. "I had thought that taking a risk like that, it would either be a flop or very profitable. Naturally, I expected it to be profitable. It was what you would call a moderate success. It performed like an ordinary picture. Over the years the popularity has grown and it's become a cult film, so it eventually made a profit, but I had been looking for a quick profit." The film was shown at Cannes in 1960 as one of two American films invited to be shown "out-of-competition."

Griffith said his first indication of the film's popularity came when he was assistant director on Corman's **THE YOUNG RACERS** (1963) in Europe. "Soundman Francis Ford Coppola pulled off his earphones, came running across the set and interrupted the shot, threw his arms around me, and said, 'You did **LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS**!' That was the first time I'd heard of anyone ever having seen the picture."

Griffith contemplated doing a sequel to be called **SON OF SEYMOUR**, picking up the story 25 years later. Reading like **DOWN AND OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS**, Seymour is now a bum forced out of his home in the city dump where he had gone in hiding. He seeks

Mushnik (Mel Welles) caters to his best customer, Mrs. Shiva (Leola Wendorff).



continued on page 61

STUART GORDON

--the Genre's Re-Animator

Gordon infused the horror genre with new blood, and now takes on fantasy and science fiction.

By Stephen Rebello

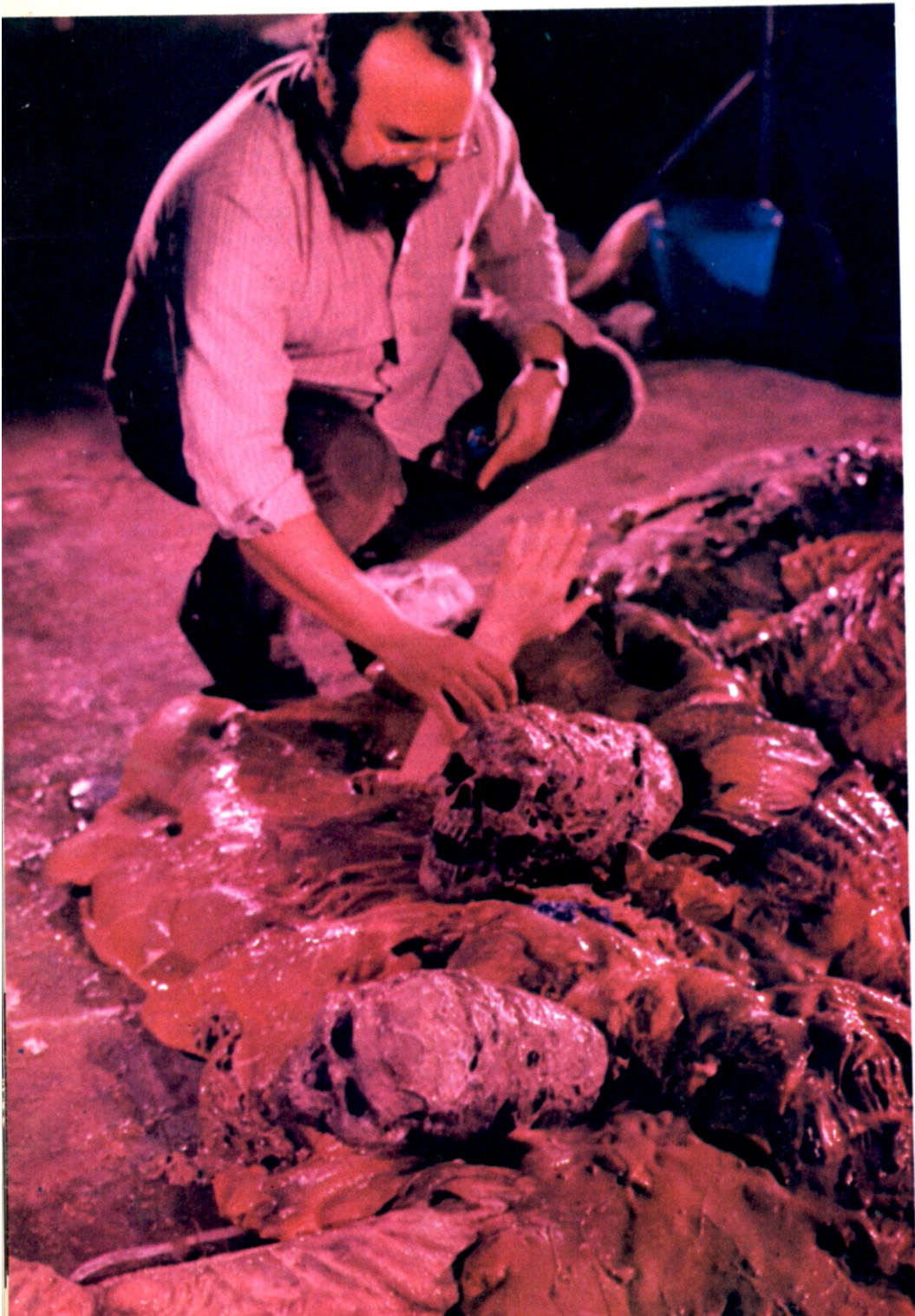
Ask one high-rolling Hollywood agent why Empire Pictures gets listed among the "R's" in her Rolodex and she'll sigh as if the answer were self-evident, "Because Empire does remakes, rehashes, and rip-offs. This month's hit—*ALIEN*, *GREMLINS*, *TERMINATOR*—is Empire's knock-off next month." But, ironically, another "R," Stuart Gordon's *RE-ANIMATOR*, a head-on collision of Lovecraft, gonzo humor, queasy sex, and buckets of blood, marked Empire's first breakthrough toward the critical and financial big time.

RE-ANIMATOR, independently-made in 18 days for less than a million dollars, so jazzed Empire's president Charles Band that he distributed it unrated, virtually insuring it theater and ad boycotts. Band's gambit may have cost the movie as much as 60% in revenues, but *RE-ANIMATOR* induced *New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone* critics to so lose their heads that it achieved instant Upchuck Classic status, won a Cannes critics' prize, and saw first-time director Gordon hailed as everything from the "pop Bunuel" to "Hitchcock on helium."

Hitching its wagon to a rising star, Empire funded Gordon's next three thrillers. Two were filmed last year and the third began shooting in August. And, if the genial, 39 year-old Emmy winner and former Chicago theatre wunderkind survives his press hype, Gordon could shake up Empire the way Val Lewton did RKO's B-movie unit back in the '40s.

"I love movies that break all the rules," enthused Gordon, a bearded, soft-spoken Lane Tech graduate, in his cramped offices where momentos of his first movies vie with storyboards for his next. "I love being terrorized by the feeling, like in *PSYCHO* and *ALIEN*, that the filmmaker is *not* going to stop where others have."

Director Stuart Gordon on a grisly set from his new Empire Pictures release *FROM BEYOND*, filmed in Rome. Gordon directs his actor (beneath the set) in a scene where the character gets absorbed by a creature from "the beyond." Gordon used colored lighting to represent views of the film's parallel dimension.





Director Stuart Gordon poses next to the headless corpse of Dr. Hill from Empire Pictures' horror hit *THE-REANIMATOR*.

Yet for some, Gordon's cinematic glee for brain-peeling and hilariously flamboyant morgue scenes proved too much of a good thing. One critic (who gushed over *RAMBO*'s flag-waving Fascism) dubbed *RE-ANIMATOR* "the most disgusting film I've ever seen."

Observed Gordon, who staged controversial premieres of David Mamet's "Sexual Perversity in Chicago" and a "Peter Pan" with nude Never-Never-Landers, "We cut back on a few things ourselves because when we screened it for a local science fiction society, it was so strong that the audience pulled away from the movie. Empire is one of the few distributors that would take the risk of releasing an unrated movie, but the thing about horror movies is, if it gets too real, it's not fun anymore. That's why I'm not a big slasher movie fan. I like to use horror to create illusions."

Even more audacious was *RE-ANIMATOR*'s meld of sex and horror, including its now-legendary yueko sequence wherein a horny doctor's decapitated head happily slurps a naked nymphette's nether parts. "Dennis Paoli [one of Gordon's two co-writers] called me in the middle of the

night laughing his ass off," Gordon recalled. "He said, 'I just wrote the world's first visual pun!' Necrophilia being one of the big taboos, we were thinking, 'Wouldn't it be interesting to turn it around and have a dead person make love to someone alive?' I mean monsters always carried around girls in negligees, so there was always the implication. There's a natural combination of horror and sex. What we did was be more upfront about it."

During shooting on *RE-ANIMATOR*, Gordon's theatre cronies and critics, who admired him as a founder of Chicago's Organic Theatre and co-author of the acclaimed "Bleacher Bums" and "E/R," warned that wading in blood and gore would ruin his career. Smiled Gordon, "I got questions like 'Is this going to be released in America?' and 'What drive-in will this be playing in?' That's just part of the attitude people have about horror or exploitation movies. When the good reviews came out, a lot of people who looked down their noses changed their tunes. Pauline Kael liked it, so it must be good."

But even Gordon, who researched,

rehearsed and staged *RE-ANIMATOR* as meticulously as any previous project, suffered cold feet about toiling in the land of the B's. "I had this image in my head that B-movies were this sort of sleazy world of cigar-chomping bald guys trying to grab the starlets all the time," Gordon noted. "Instead, it's a world of people who give you their best work—in fact, go above and beyond the call of duty—because they see it as a way of coming in the back door of Hollywood. I hired actors with a lot of stage experience, and we talked the same language. Since I hate going to movies where the actors aren't really playing it for real, we had a lot of discussions about character, motivation and some of the best lines in the movie were created on the set. Like theatre, it's a team effort."

When *RE-ANIMATOR* became one of Europe's top-grossing films last year, then spent months on America's video Top Forty, Gordon found himself courted by Hollywood studio bosses who privately admitted, "We loved *RE-ANIMATOR*, but we could never make a picture like that." Ducking offers to direct "rehashes of *MAD MAX*, *ROMANCING THE*



DOLLS stars Judy Bower (left) as a little girl who tries to protect her friend (Ralph Morris) from dolls which come to life. For the film, a February release, Gordon used the design talents of comic book artist Neal Adams (above).

STONE, and other movies already done to death," Gordon shot two Empire thrillers back to back on the company's recently purchased Rome soundstages.

DOLLS, completed in six weeks on a \$1.2 million budget from an Ed Naha script is Gordon's nod to "old-fashioned horror films" of the Val Lewton/Jacques Tourneur ilk. "The story—about dolls coming to life—is one that people have seen before," explained Gordon of the project Empire originally earmarked for a low-budget video movie. "But I found the script so strange and funny because Ed Naha's approach was to make it a kind of horrible fairy tale. I'd been reading Bruno Bettelheim's 'The Uses of Enchantment,' and agreed with his idea that

fairy tales *should* be dark and scary."

When Gordon's interest bumped-up the **DOLLS** project in Empire's esteem, its budget rose to match its aspirations. Using top-flight Italian designers and crews, Empire built an expressionistic old dark house set for the film which, in time-honored B-movie tradition, will be recycled for future projects. "The movie has a kind of child's nightmare quality," noted Gordon of the project featuring Organic Theatre alumni Ian Patrick Williams and Caroline Purdy-Gordon (the director's wife), plus a largely English cast.

"What I discovered with the script," Gordon noted, "was that it was Hansel and Gretel done as a horror movie, so the production reflects that—very expressionistic, lots of atmosphere, bloodstains on the floor, thunder and lightning. Although it gets pretty explicit, it's not **RE-ANIMATOR** where you're sort of wallowing in the gore." **DOLLS** requires lengthy postproduction for stop-motion special effects by David Allen.

More ambitious is **FROM BEYOND**, Gordon's \$2.5 million rematch with Lovecraft, which Empire unleashed in October. Although the film, featuring **RE-ANIMATOR**'s Jeffrey Combs and Barbara Crampton, rolled one month after **DOLLS**, Empire released it first to capitalize on Gordon's shockmaster reputation. A five-minute assemblage of teaser footage, which Empire trotted out at Cannes, features a shape-shifting man/beast, gut-wrenching special effects,

plenty of actress Crampton's flesh, plus a hint of the looney-tunes humor that put Gordon's first movie on the map. Gordon hopes **FROM BEYOND** will prove more outrageous than **RE-ANIMATOR**.

Of the script, co-written with playwright/screenwriters Dennis Paoli and William J. Norris, Gordon observed, "This was a much more difficult adaptation than **RE-ANIMATOR** because it was just the setup and we had to come up with the rest of the movie. Lovecraft's story is only five pages long."

Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness" inspired Gordon and his screenwriters' conception for the film's monster. Explained Gordon, "We came across a creature, the Shoggoth, which were the slaves of the Old Ones that once populated the earth. The Shoggoth is a kind of protoplasmic ball fifteen feet in

diameter, which has the capacity to change itself into anything it needs to be. If they needed arms, they'd just grow arms. Somehow, they also gained intelligence."

Observed Gordon of Lovecraft's constantly-evolving Shoggoth, "One trouble with horror movies is that once you see the monster, the movie's over. This idea allowed us to have the monster changing constantly—just when you think you've seen it as bad as it can get, it gets worse."

Gordon's script elaborations goosed-up **FROM BEYOND**'s special effects requirements. Spectacular conceptual drawings by comic book artist Neal Adams were used to springboard ideas by special effects men John Naulin, Anthony Doublin, and John Buechler, all **RE-ANIMATOR** graduates, with Mark Shostrom (**NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 2**)

The decapitated and mad Dr. Hill (David Gale) manages to hold his own in Stuart Gordon's horror hit **THE RE-ANIMATOR**.



Dr. Pretorius (Ted Sorel) undergoes a continuing transformation in **FROM BEYOND**, Gordon's followup to **THE RE-ANIMATOR** also based on a story by H.P. Lovecraft.

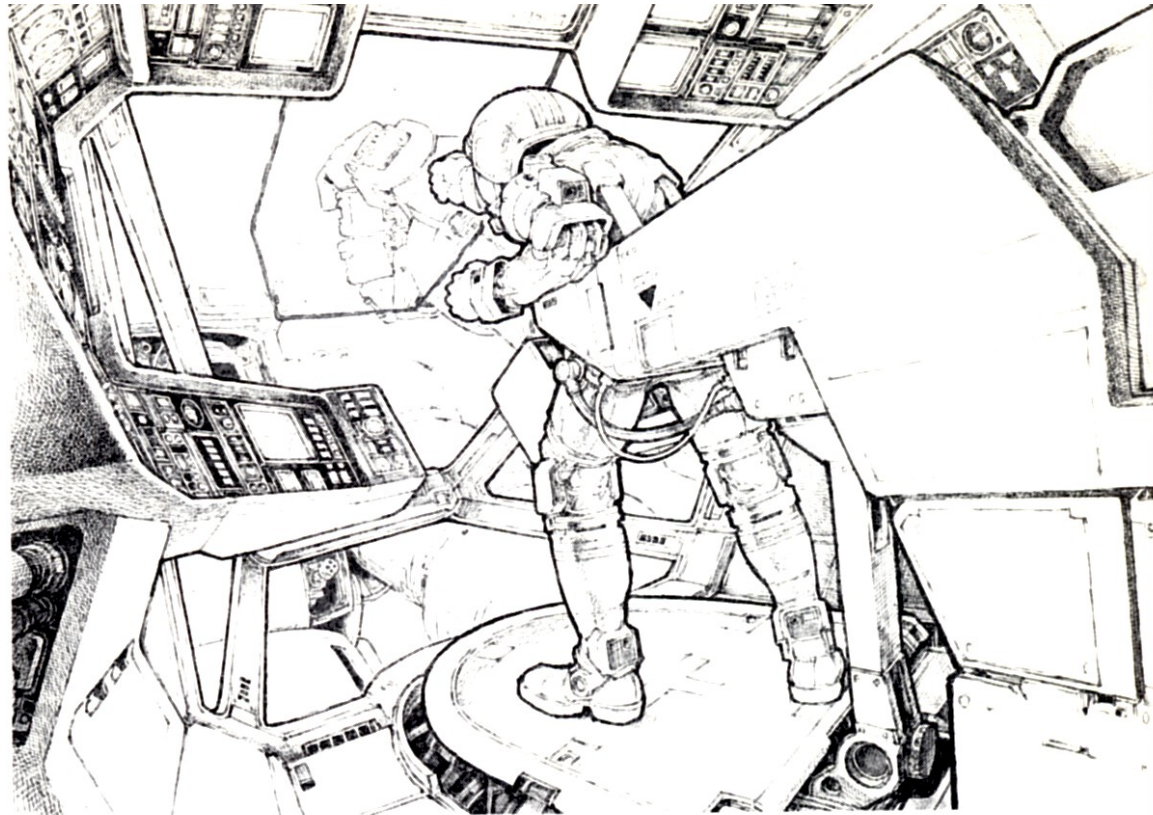


added to the mix.

"Lovecraft had the creature as a nameless, shapeless thing too unspeakable to describe," laughed Gordon, all too aware that the days of moviemakers getting away with intangible horrors are long gone. "There were *incredible* effects problems because the doctor character who merges with the beast has a lot of appearances in the movie. We split the effects into various categories. Like magicians, special effects guys don't like to share secrets, so there was a professional coolness at first. The further we got into it, they started all working together, so we forgot who was supposed to be doing what. It became a case of, 'Can you top this?' and often they *could*. That worked beautifully because one effect needed eight or nine people to run it. They developed a group style for the creature's various incarnations that was similar."

Although Empire will not risk releasing FROMBEYOND unrated, Gordon believes REANIMATOR may seem like a warm-up in comparison. "If we've captured a very Lovecraftian feeling," Gordon commented. "Also, the Italian union crews were top-of-the-line—our art director had just finished ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA—so it ended up looking like a big-budget film from a major studio."

Next on the boards is ROBOJOX, which Gordon is filming for three months in Rome beginning August 19. This one, a post-apocalyptic science fiction yarn, stems from his original idea scripted by science fiction writer Joe Haldeman. Slated to cost around \$7 million, Gordon explained, "At first Empire said it was too big, then as they saw the material, they got excited about it. It was inspired by a trip to Toys 'R' Us (Gordon has two daughters) where I noticed half the store was robots. I got very excited about the pictures on the boxes showing these enormous robots with maintenance crews climbing all over them. I felt if you were to take the kinds of effects that are available, turn them loose on this material to really create a sense of the size and



ROBOJOX is currently being filmed by Gordon in Rome for Empire Pictures, on a budget of \$7 million. Designs by artist Ron Cobb illustrate the concept of the picture, co-authored by SF writer Joe Haldeman: giant robot fighters which mimic the actions of their human hosts.

power these robots could have, you could really have an exciting film."

Writer Haldeman's fourth draft screenplay underwent a Dennis Paoli rewrite to allow Gordon plenty of leeway for quirky humor and characters. Observed the director, "The real trick has been trying to keep the characters from turning into robots, too. The great thing about Joe Haldeman's work is that he manages to make this whole thing very believable. This isn't going to end up looking like a Saturday morning cartoon show, but the real thing."

Although Gordon will follow ROBOJOX with a non-Empire project, GRIS-GRIS, a voodoo thriller set in New Orleans, the director denies he will inevitably succumb to the big-studio booby trap as have Carpenter, Cronenberg, and Dante. The director asserted, "What interests me the most is breaking new ground and doing things differently. Empire continues to make those kinds of films where anything goes, which is what I like best. I've never been censored. I find that kind of freedom liberating." □



Link

A new thriller from Richard Franklin, the director of PATRICK, ROAD GAMES, PSYCHO II, and CLOAK & DAGGER.

By Alan Jones

For his first British film, Australian born director Richard Franklin has chosen a unique subject. LINK is the film that the 37 year-old Franklin had wanted to make since 1980 and he calls it "an anthropological thriller as opposed to a psychological one." The Cannon Films release opened October 3.

Funded by Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment at a cost of "a little over \$6 million," LINK stars Terence Stamp, Elisabeth Shue (THE KARATE KID), and three chimpanzees named Carrie, Jed, and Lock. Lock plays the pivotal Link character, one based in part on a famous chimp in the 1930's called J. Fred Muggs who used to wear a butler's outfit and smoke cigars for various media stunts.

LINK is the latest link in the extraordinary career of one of the genre's better directors. Like many other horror/thriller directors working at the moment, Franklin owes a great deal to the late Alfred Hitchcock. Franklin cites VERTIGO as the film that shaped his aspirations as a director. After a succession of thrillers like PATRICK, ROAD GAMES, PSYCHO II, and CLOAK AND DAGGER, the debt Franklin owes Hitchcock is clear. And although Franklin is no longer consciously thinking about Hitchcock in order to evolve his own style, LINK carries on this influential thread—it is firmly rooted in basic Daphne Du Maurier and REBECCA.



Richard Franklin (2nd from left) directs the complex chimp action for the opening of LINK on the set of an English country home at England's Shepperton studios.

Franklin made PATRICK (1978) while teaching film full-time at Melbourne's Hawthorne college. "I had the total freedom to teach what I liked," said Franklin. "Instead of letting my students make films, I actually used them as a crew and made the films myself." PATRICK started a collaboration for Franklin with the writer Everett de Roche who also wrote ROAD GAMES (1980) and would have completed a hat-trick with LINK had the film found financing at that time.

De Roche had written the screenplay for PATRICK, not to cash-in on the success of CARRIE as is commonly thought, but as a rip-off of THE EXORCIST. "The script for PATRICK was certainly around long before I ever saw CARRIE," said Franklin,

"although the shock ending was certainly a concession to that film. The film cost \$600,000 Australian, which at the time was considered moderately generous. It sounds absurd now, especially since ROAD GAMES cost \$1.8 million."

PATRICK though, was not Franklin's debut feature; in 1975 he directed THE TRUE STORY OF THE ESKIMO NELL starring Max Gillies based on the racy song. He followed this with a film for the same producer that he only admits to when pressed. The film was FANTASM (1976), which starred such porno luminaries as Rene Bond, John Holmes, Candy Samples and Uschi Digart, directed under the pseudonym Richard Bruce, Bruce being Franklin's middle name.

"But it wasn't really hard

core," said Franklin, "It was more in the style of Russ Meyer. It was a lot of fun really." Franklin shot the film in 10 days in Los Angeles, non-union, for \$40,000 Australian. The film features one suspense scene in which Rene Bond is pursued by a rapist, and money from the assignment enabled Franklin to finance PATRICK.

Franklin followed ROAD GAMES with PSYCHO II (1983) and CLOAK AND DAGGER (1984) both written by Tom Holland. The latter flopped, which Franklin put down to experience, a change of regime at Universal, and the fact that the studio wanted to bury the film because it put the star of E.T.—Henry Thomas—in jeopardy. Franklin was then offered PSYCHO III but suggested Anthony Perkins, whom he considers the best actor he has ever worked with.

It was just as well he turned the project down as LINK, the film dear to his heart, was greenlighted finally by Thorn EMI in December 1984 and the production moved to Shepperton Studios for a 12-week shoot on April 22, 1985. Co-written by Everett de Roche, Linda La Plante, and Franklin himself, the film was line-produced by DREAMCHILD's Rick McCallum as a favor to EMI. Franklin claims LINK is unique because it is the first time that real apes have 'acted' in scenes next to humans with minimum recourse to doubles in suits for long-shots and hard to capture chimp movement.

The story revolves around three chimps who aid a profes-

sor (Terence Stamp) in his home-cum-laboratory at an old country house situated on the east coast of Yorkshire. Stamp plays a celebrated anthropological writer who mysteriously disappeared in the '60s after writing a treatise on the Missing Link. He invites an American zoology student (Elisabeth Shue) to visit and work with him on his revolutionary new theories that he plans to publish in a book called *Limbo*. One day, on the brink of a major breakthrough he disappears and Shue finds herself in charge of the three simian wards—Link, who keeps the house in order, Imp (Jed) a technological and computer genius, and Voodoo (Carrie), who is considered too violent to be let out of her cage. Shue is convinced Stamp will return but suddenly visitors to the house start vanishing without a trace. And when Shue finally realizes why, it just may be too late to combat the instinctive law of the jungle.

"In 1979 I read an article in *National Geographic*," said Franklin. "It was written by Jane Goodall who has lived with chimps in Tanzania for the last 30 years. Hers is the longest study that has ever been carried out in the wild of any animal. She was shocked to discover for the first time that chimps were not only meat-eaters, but were capable of killing each other and cannibalism. These revelations resounded through the anthropological world like Margaret Mead's discoveries in Samoa in the 1920s.

Chimp trainer Ray Berwick (wearing cap) puts Jed and Lock (I) through their paces. Berwick worked for Alfred Hitchcock on *THE BIRDS* but found *LINK* more complex.



Chimpanzee Link is actually played by Lock (an orangutan in makeup by Lyle Conway) because a suitable chimp couldn't be found for the demanding role. Conway provided false ears which fit over the head like earmuffs, dyed the orang's orangish fur black, provided a chimp haircut, and added dentures to simulate a chimp's menacing canine incisors (orangs are docile fruit-eaters).

"What interested me most about the article was that in anthropological circles, when Jane Goodall discovered that chimps used sticks to fish termites out of a nest, it led to certain redefinitions. Man had believed we were the only animal to use tools, which next extended to weapons. I'm not trying to make an anthropological treatise with *LINK* but it struck me as an interesting basis for a story. I found the

whole question of amoral violence relating to the law of the jungle fascinating."

Another influence on the genesis of *LINK* came from John Carpenter and HAL-LOWEEN according to Franklin. "One of the lines I loved in the film was 'He's an animal,' and the reply 'No, he's less than an animal.' I thought, what if I had an animal behaving like a man instead of the reverse and make him neither the hero nor the villain. One way I could have done the story was to have a girl in the jungle suddenly discovering that chimps are potentially dangerous. But it struck me that it would be more interesting to take that primitivism, savagery, and innocence—as represented by a chimp—and put him in the most civilized setting imaginable."

And that setting according to Franklin is a large English country house by the sea. "*LINK* may be more like *PATRICK* than anything else I've done, although tonally it resembles *PSYCHO II*. At the same time I'm trying to tap the well of Victorian melodrama that the English location pro-

vides. I wanted the house to look as if it was straight out of a Bronte novel. The film begins with Shue—more Eyre, by the way, than Tarzan's mate or indeed Goodall—arriving by taxi at the house with the driver ominously warning her of danger and strange noises in the night. I'm in absolute heaven with the gothic mystery ambience."

Franklin would have made *LINK* straight after *ROAD GAMES* had it not been for the fact that no one would take the project seriously and no one could comprehend the idea of chimps playing roles of equal importance to the actors. "Backers would look at the script and recoil in terror at the endless pages of non-dialogue," he said. "I couldn't convince anyone, until *GREYSTOKE* was released, that it was feasible. Then everyone wanted me to make the film with men-in-suits and there was no challenge in that approach for me. I don't care how good some of these suits look, the bottom line is that they aren't real chimps.

"There is something very

HITCHCOCK'S PUPIL

Director Richard Franklin got taken under Hitchcock's wing when he met his idol while a student at USC.

By Alan Jones

Richard Franklin started making 8mm short films in Australia when he was just ten years-old and his ambition to be a director took him to USC in 1967. "It proved to be a lucky time," said Franklin, who first got hooked on Hitchcock by *PSYCHO* and the director's TV show. "What I've done in Hollywood since relates as much to the friends I made as the talent I have." Franklin's contemporaries during his two year stay were: John Milius, John Carpenter, Robert Zemeckis, and Randal Kleiser, the latter providing him with his first opportunity to work in Hollywood as producer of *THE BLUE LAGOON* (1980).

At USC Franklin set about organizing retrospective screenings of Hitchcock's films with the help of film history lecturer Arthur Knight. All went fine until Franklin got around to *ROPE*, which Hitchcock had removed from distribution.

"It came down to asking permission from the great man himself," said Franklin. "So I wrote a letter to him and one day, out of the blue, a phone call came opening with: 'Good Morning Mr. Franklin.' It was Hitch asking why I wanted to screen *ROPE*. I must have been a courageous 19 year-old because I asked him if he would like to come down and talk to the students. I was thrilled when he consented to the offer."

Hitchcock's session at USC is mentioned in John Russell Taylor's book on the director. According to Taylor, Hitchcock had arranged to be interrupted by an overseas telephone call if the evening looked like it wasn't going well. The fail-safe call was never needed.

"There I was on stage, petrified, trying to chair a discussion in my freshman semester with my idol," said Franklin. "What made it worse was that there were people in the audience like George Lucas and John Carpen-



Student Richard Franklin walks with idol Alfred Hitchcock on the campus of USC during the late sixties.

ter, plus all the staff.

"You have to realize that at that time the American filmmakers did not have the pre-eminence they have now. The prevailing attitude at the time is best illustrated in a classroom experience I had. The tutor, who shall remain nameless, was analyzing a scene from *A HARD DAY'S NIGHT* over and over as if it was *CITIZEN KANE*. I finally broke in and asked, 'Are we ever going to study any American pictures?' All we had covered were films by artists like Lester and Antonioni. His reply was, 'Oh, I've heard about you, you're the student who's bringing all these tired old hacks to talk to everyone.' That attitude is incomprehensible by today's standards." Franklin subsequently chaired a discussion with another of his idols, John Ford.

Hitchcock obviously enjoyed the experience because he invited Franklin to visit him on the set of his 1968 film *TOPAZ* and on a number of other occasions, the last during the making of *FAMILY PLOT* in 1976. "Frankly though," Franklin reflected, "I would say I learned most about him by watching his movies. In person he tended to tell the same anecdotes repeatedly. They all illustrated a point to be sure but

you can get all of that by reading the Francois Truffaut book. He was a little frustrating in that way. You tend to look at Hitch's life in terms of it having some predestined sweep, or as Donald Spoto did in his book. You see it as having all the symbolic leit-motifs that existed in his work. In fact, I've now come to the realization that he was just moving from film to film with frustrations along the way concerning movies he could not make, and awards he did not win."

Although Franklin tried to show Hitchcock some of his own work, *PATRICK* in particular, Hitchcock's secretary, Peggy Robertson, insisted he avoid the issue as Hitchcock had

an aversion to viewing other directors' thrillers. Franklin feels though that Alfred Hitchcock would have been pleased to see that he was carrying on some sort of legacy, if not his own, then the tradition of silent filmmaking that Hitch termed "pure cinema."

"Just prior to directing *PSYCHO II*," explained Franklin, "instead of running a lot of Hitch's films, I ran F. W. Murnau and some other pictures Hitchcock had admired as a young man. It made me feel extremely good about taking on the daunting *PSYCHO II* project."

Franklin cites examples of how Murnau's work influenced Hitchcock. "Murnau's first American feature, *SUNRISE*, begins with a city reflected in the side of a building which is exactly the opening of *NORTH BY NORTHWEST*," said Franklin. "The lead up to a death scene was underscored by Gounod's 'Funeral March of the Marionettes' which became Hitchcock's television series theme. And the murder in *SUNRISE* you would swear was directed by Hitchcock himself. It made me realize just how much he was carrying on a tradition that he was desperate to understand as well." □

eerie about doing a close-up or making eye contact with a real ape, as you don't know what he is thinking exactly. I'm showing the ape, showing what he sees, cutting back to the ape and letting the audience imbue him with their own response. The trick is that I then have him do the unexpected. I'm not trying to anthropomorphize the ape and I'm not trying to say they are just like men because they aren't. But they are like us in one particular aspect. Their aggression quotient."

Even so, the completion guarantors insisted that apes have stand-ins when Franklin was blocking scenes and as a fail-safe in case the animals felt reticent about some of the action. Stand-in chores were handled by Peter Elliot, who played the ape hounded in London's Hyde Park in *GREY-STOKE*, and veteran midget Bobby Porter, from *E.T.* and *CLOAK AND DAGGER*. In the most bizarre turn of events, the ubiquitous Lyle Conway designed a fully workable ape suit used for disguising an orangutan as Link.

"The apes are terribly good as long as we don't try and get them to sustain a performance for more than a minute," said Franklin. "For 15-20 seconds they will do exactly what you tell them, but too many behaviors in one shot is far too much. *LINK* will have more coverage than I usually go in for and probably be more fragmented as a result but that is the only way to get a performance out of them. A 6 year-old chimp can throw three grown men into the air. The tradeoff came when we had to film this aggression but keep him under control as well. This necessitated us taking all precautions."

Franklin said that *LINK* would not have been made if he hadn't met Hollywood's number one animal trainer, Ray Berwick, the man who trained the warblers for Hitchcock's *THE BIRDS*. "That film has to be the most impossible picture that was ever made," said Franklin. "People only take it for granted because it was made."

"I was on the Universal tour one day and discovered that Berwick was responsible for the chimp inside the dog robot

in the BATTLESTAR GALACTICA display. I hadn't realized he also trained chimps. He was extremely helpful at the script level. Berwick made this film easy for me but he has told me it is his most challenging film since THE BIRDS.

"We evolved a routine. The actors rehearsed with chimp stand-ins. When the actors were satisfied, the chimps would rehearse their behavior with the trainers taking the actor's parts. Lastly, when the camera had been fully rehearsed we put them together. I thought I might get some hostility for representing chimps the way I do on screen but every animal trainer I've spoken to has applauded the project."

Because the chimps were specially trained in California prior to shooting, the only way the movie could be made in England to satisfy British quarantine laws was to turn the Shepperton soundstages and Scottish locations into quarantine stations complete with fortified wire fencing and double doors. All the crew had to be inoculated as well.

Although Franklin did originally get certification to film LINK in Australia, he always wanted England as the setting which proved a natural when EMI's head of production, Verity Lambert, decided to back the project. "I did have some interest in making the film in the Florida Everglades at one stage," said Franklin,

Link's stand-in (Peter Elliot) in chimp makeup by Lyle Conway, used sparingly by Franklin when chimps wouldn't work.



Director Richard Franklin (seated center, above) films the scene where Link lifts a van with the help of some behind-the-scenes mechanical assistance. Franklin liked the egalitarian atmosphere of the English shoot where the director is treated just like any member of the crew.

"but the Terence Stamp character talks about civilization a lot—where it begins, what is and isn't—and it would have been out of place. I couldn't have drawn on Daphne Du Maurier or THE OLD DARK HOUSE feel with that pseudo setting."

Shooting in England reminded Franklin of Australian methods. "The crew is together and the director is just another member of it," he said. "Not that I want to be regarded as some sort of executive because I like that egalitarianism. In the States a film is run like a military operation and you get called Sir all the time. Being called 'Guvnor' here has taken some getting used to! But at least here there's only one person to report to and not a bunch of executives whom you cannot please all the time."

With regards to casting LINK Franklin had this to say. "I interviewed 30 girls for the part of Jane. Elizabeth Shue had a fresh innocence that was absolutely right for the part. And she was blonde. All the women who work with apes seem to be, so work that one out! A lot of the lines her character has are her own, ones



that she said in the course of arguing with me over the nature of things. She's new, interesting, and hopefully another Meg Tilley. As for Terence Stamp, he doesn't do much these days which is precisely what I liked about him. One tends to associate him with the Swinging Sixties which is perfect for the part of an urbane Professor who disappeared during that era."

Jokingly, Franklin said he has invented a new process for LINK—Pongovision! "It is an effect unlike anything you've ever seen. We imply the apes' point-of-view, and the camera moves in their own peculiar generic way. It is a mix of steadicam work and optical printing. The opening shot may not be TOUCH OF EVIL but it certainly gives HALLOWEEN a run for its money."

With LINK in the can, Franklin is turning his attention to a new project, THE LOST BOYS. He won't reveal exactly what the new film is about but said it fits into the "edgy" category that he feels has marked all his previous work. "I like doing outrageous things straight on," he said. "I never play anything straight and consequently I seem to get away with doing things that from other filmmakers would seem clichéd. By 'edgy' I mean stuff that by anyone else would be awful. Imagine STRANGER ON A TRAIN by someone other than Hitchcock. Or a film that is based 60% of the time in a truck as was the case with ROAD GAMES. Or the ultimate, making a sequel to PSYCHO. In some ways I feel I've repaid my debt to Hitchcock now." □

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

The series is back, but network censorship seems to be encroaching on the boundaries of imagination.

By Ben Herndon

After an uncertain wait in the tense land that is the middle ground between light and shadow, *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* got renewed early last summer and appears this year in a new Saturday 10 p.m. timeslot that will put a lot of VCRs to work and hopefully provide the show with a better chance to build an audience in a less competitive time. As *TWILIGHT ZONE*'s executive story consultant Alan Brennert pointed out, "We hope to capitalize on the freedom within the late hour."

One dominant note of frustration and anger in the writers' bullpen is the loss of last year's creative consultant Harlan Ellison, who removed himself from *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*'s writing staff after a long-simmering dispute over the fate of "Nackles," the Donald Westlake story of WASP bigotry and retribution that Ellison scripted for the show last year.

"Nackles" had been approved for production and Ellison was slated to direct the script. Then CBS upset the applecart by deciding to cancel the episode after preproduction was already underway. Ellison issued one of his patented ultimatums to

the network, exiting the show late last Fall, and vowing never to return until CBS agreed to film the episode.

Vast, however, is the power of television's siren song to reclaim disillusioned souls. Summer of 1986 saw a determined Ellison reworking his original script in such a way as to give CBS no reason to balk again. The earlier foes at CBS Program Practices were no longer part of the decision making system (having been reassigned to a "sort of CBS

halfway house . . ." Ellison reported) and with the backing of CBS liason and vice president of in-house production, Tony Barr, Ellison rewrote the script, addressing the objections of earlier regimes at network Program Practices.

Optimism reigned and it was whispered in the hallways of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* that Ellison's return to the writing staff was "not beyond the realm of possibility." But it was not to be.

"They blindsided him," was

the grim autopsy of Alan Brennert. "Program Practices definitely pulled a fast one." According to Ellison, after Barr presented the "Nackles" rewrite to network executives on high, Barr, Ellison, and executive producer Phillip DeGuere were shocked to hear that the revised script had been shown to a panel of "minority representatives" who objected to the script, and essentially killed it. Ellison suspected that the panel "never happened. That was bullshit," he said, "clearly bullshit."

Other staff writers said that the maneuver sounded like something that the network might indeed pull. One panel member was alleged to have questioned why whites were not also portrayed as victims in the script. Now that Ellison's bold, probing and hard-hitting themes have disqualified him from the television arena, the boundaries of imagination must creep in—closer, tamer, more regulated, less challenging.

In another important personnel move for the show, the team of Tony and Nancy Lawrence have come aboard as supervising producers to replace Jim Crocker. Tony Law-

Shelley Duvall collapses after receiving a message from a flying saucer which falls next to her in "A Saucer of Lonliness," based on a story by Theodore Sturgeon.



rence was the writer of two classic OUTER LIMITS episodes ("The Man Who Was Never Born," and "Children of Spider Country"). He created the eerie parapsychological series THE SIXTH SENSE and with wife Nancy created the TV series THE PHOENIX.

Two original scripts the Lawrences have prepared for this season are "A Little Time for Kip," about a dying father who has a rapprochement with his son through supernatural means, and "Songs of the Younger World," a turn of the century love story wherein a couple use their powers of transformation to escape their sad plight.

A high quantity/quality contributor last year, Alan Brennert has several projects developing. His ambitious "Voices in the Earth," is set in a dead Earth 1000 years in the future and blends scientific and metaphysical concepts. His script "A Winter Memory"—a memory transfer story—is now awaiting approval for production. Brennert has also reported a few early setbacks. His script "The Third Sex"—a tastefully done story of androgyny—had all the earmarks of being a tough sell and Brennert reveals that "CBS didn't want to touch it with a ten-foot pole."

Rockne O'Bannon returns to the writing staff with a promotion from story editor to story consultant. He is working on an original script, "The Storyteller," about a schoolboy's story which seems to grant the hearer immortality, and will also rescript another vintage TWILIGHT ZONE—arguably the first "classic" episode to be remade—Serling's "The After Hours." This episode was one of the truly frightening entries in the original series' early years as department store mannequins come alive and plot to reclaim their AWOL comrades. The original was directed with creepy assurance by Douglas Heyes, veteran of nine original TWILIGHT ZONEs and any remake will have big shoes to fill.

Four of last year's script contributors are also back. George R.R. Martin joined the writing staff for the final two months of last season. With Bryce Marit-

ano, Martin has a new script approved for production about an Elvis impersonator who goes back in time to 1954 Memphis and meets up with you-know-who in "The Once and Future King." This story has commanded the lion's share of early season excitement and will be the episode to kick off the Fall season. Reports are that Jeff Yagher is absolutely uncannily in both the role of the Elvis impersonator and as the real Elvis. Martin commands a vast knowledge of the world of rock and roll, as was evidenced in his novel *Armageddon Rag*.

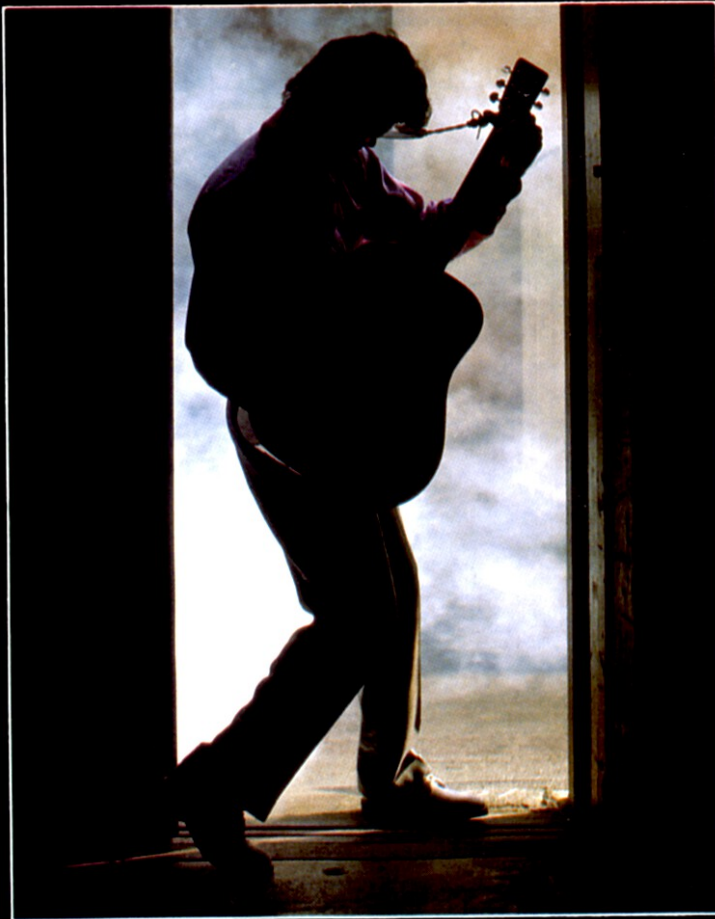
Martin is also working on the script for the Terry Matz story "Toys of Caliban"—said to be a variant on the original series episode "It's a Good Life"—and has also scripted the Phyllis Eisenstein story, "Lost and Found," in which THE COLOR PURPLE's Akosua Busia discovers the bizarre reason her possessions have been vanishing. Martin is also working on an original teleplay entitled, "The Road Less Traveled," about a draft resister who is confronted by his ghostly battle-scarred self.

Martin Pasko and Rebecca Parr are on as story editors and are working on a script for the James Morrow story "Assemblage of Kristin," about the recipient of an organ transplant who changes in an unexpected way.

Michael Cassutt joins the show as a staff writer. He is at work on an original teleplay entitled "The Card," about a troubled housewife who possesses a haunted credit card.

The Fall season will also see a high number of freelance stories and scripts. Slated to run in the '86 season premiere is the David Gerrold script of Theodore Sturgeon's "A Saucer of Loneliness," in which Shelley Duvall is chosen to receive a message from a flying saucer. Isaac Asimov's "Hell Fire" will be scripted by Joe Gannon, the tale of film taken during a nuclear blast that reveals a horrifying secret.

Ron Cobb (Conan illustrator and conceptual designer on ALIEN/ALIENS) and Robin Love have written "Shelter Skelter"—a nuke survivalist story with a classically ironic TWILIGHT ZONE ending.



Jeff Yagher as Gary Pitkin, a mediocre Elvis impersonator who goes back in time and meets the real Elvis in the series' opening episode "The Once and Future King."

Rounding out the other early projects being developed are Parke Godwin's time travel romance, "Time and Teresa Golowitz," J. M. DeMatteis' hippy/yuppie metamorphosis story, "The Girl That I Married," Edward Redlich's "Private Channel," which features a Sony Walkman that enables the user to read minds, Lan O'Kun's daffy alternate universe story "The World Next Door," and Paul Chittlick and Jeremy Finch's "Aqua Vita," a variant on the vintage TWILIGHT ZONE episode "The Trade-ins," in which oldsters got another crack at youth.

At the beginning of last season, THE TWILIGHT ZONE's writing staff almost unanimously marveled at the fact that network interference seemed well within tolerable levels. However, the "Nackles" incident seems to have signaled a clamping-down on story material approval procedures—at least on the network side. Perhaps CBS perceives this tactic as a way to improve story quality and achieve higher ratings, but if hard-hitting controver-

sial subject matter is vetoed in favor of safer, less daring topics, then the series is in danger of sinking like a stone and CBS will wonder why.

Ironically, Rod Serling created the original TWILIGHT ZONE over 25 years ago as a format to bring political, social, and moral issues to the attention of the viewing public. His logic was that network censors would not object as readily to a controversial theme if it was labeled "fantasy." One wonders if the networks have come very far since then.

Perhaps an incident from last year answers that question. It seems that the long awaited and brilliant Harlan Ellison teleplay of the Stephen King story "Gramma" had a bit of trouble on its way into our living rooms. The problem? In a line of dialogue the episode's young actor vows to be a good boy and (are you listening role model emulators?) "never say the 'F' word again..."

"That was a battle royale," recalled Alan Brennert. "It took months to get that approved..." □

REVIEWS

Henson's fantasy sapped by its lack of theme or emotion

LABYRINTH

A Tri-Star Pictures release of a Henson Associates and Lucasfilm Ltd. presentation. 6/86, 101 mins. In color and Dolby. Director, Jim Henson. Executive producer, George Lucas. Producer, Eric Rattray. Executive supervising producer, David Lazer. Screenplay, Terry Jones, from a story by Dennis Lee & Jim Henson. Director of photography, Alex Thomson. Editor, John Grover. Music, Trevor Jones. Songs, David Bowie. Production designer, Elliot Scott. Art directors: Roger Cain, Peter Howitt, Michael White, & Terry Ackland-Snow. Conceptual designer/creature designer, Brian Froud. Director of choreography and puppet movement, Cheryl McFadden. Puppeteer coordinator, Brian Henson. Special effects supervisor, George Gibbs. Chief animatronic design, Tony Dunsterville.

Jareth David Bowie
Sarah Jennifer Connelly
Toby Toby Froud
Hoggle Shari Weiser, Brian Henson,
Jim Henson (voice)
Ludo Ron Mueck
Didymus David Goetz, David Barclay,
David Shaughnessy (voice)

by Allen Malmquist

LABYRINTH takes a completely different path from THE DARK CRYSTAL, Jim Henson's first original Muppet fantasy. It twists and turns with a lighter, brighter approach, with plenty of roadside humor. Unfortunately, though not stumbling

upon the pitfalls of its predecessor, LABYRINTH still ends up down a cinematic dead end.

The tale follows Sarah, a mortal girl, who, in a fit of frustration, turns her baby brother Toby over to Jareth, the Goblin King. To save Toby from transformation into a grimy little monster, she must beat the clock through his Majesty's magical labyrinth.

Though not as intense a world creation as THE DARK CRYSTAL, LABYRINTH forms its own stylized reality, tempering dark, villain-filled fantasy with humor—from pudgy-faced door knockers to crazy little castle guards. Screenwriter Terry Jones brings to bear childlike imagination of a different sort than fellow-Python Terry Gilliam (director of TIME BANDITS), sending Sarah down a pit of helping hands, bringing Jareth up out of what at first appears to be just another little midget of the menagerie, with events and characters birthing a



David Bowie as Goblin King Jareth and hero Jennifer Connelly in LABYRINTH.

MUPPET SHOW THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS air. But the zaniness comes and goes, never quite finding firm ground.

Hoggle, number one sidekick, capsulates a mundane reluctant-helper personality inside the body of a pock-marked dwarf. Better if he were played by an unmasked little person, or bore the form of a more unusual, exotic creature. Ludo and Sir Didymus are much more interesting, the first a gentle giant akin to Thog and Sweetums

and the latter a slightly nutty little piece of chivalry with some of the manic flair of Kermit the Frog, but they come in far too late in the story.

We start with Sarah, a passable hero, but her riddle-solving ability comes out of nowhere, and her moments of cleverness, such as with the reluctant door knockers, come too seldom to really make you respect and root for her.

In ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, even without fancy dress, goblin hair, makeup, and juggling prowess, David Bowie snares you. Here, his mystic quality shines best where he lends the Goblin King his talents as a songwriter/singer. Yet even these numbers are not particularly well-staged, and often cut off. Too, Bowie seems a bit tame throughout his role; inside lurks a truly grand, maniacal Jareth waiting to be unleashed.

In fact, the whole film seems held back. A lack of hard-hitting angles, movement, and cutting saps the strength of the goblin town battle. Jareth should be a much more frightening villain. The baby he kidnaps should slowly evolve into a goblin, until his sister saves and restores him. If Henson meant to keep LABYRINTH safe for little children, he forgot the scariness of SNOW WHITE and the pathos of DUMBO. DARK CRYSTAL's emphasis upon mood and feeling should not have been wholly exorcised. And its lack of theme not so heartily held on to.

Sarah realizes at the beginning that she made a mistake and must get her brother back; she plods

continued on page 59

Digital Productions' computer animation made the credits of LABYRINTH fly by

The titles of LABYRINTH consist of a computer graphics simulation (by Digital Productions) of a mystical barn owl that flies through a reflective maze to reveal the names of the cast and crew. Director Jim Henson wanted the animated owl to approach photo-realism in its physical structure and movement.

Digital's producer Allan Peach worked closely with animator/art director Bill Kroyer, technical director Larry Yaeger and a team of twenty software developers, designer/encoders, and production staff over several months to turn Kroyer's designs into a highly detailed computer rendering. There are over 250 moving parts to the owl, which constitutes a level of

complexity beyond anything that has been done in computer animation.

An automatic method of digitally encoding the owl's head from a clay sculpture was devised, reducing the encoding work and yielding a more highly detailed result than would be feasible by hand. A further degree of realism was achieved by mapping textures onto the surface of all the parts that compose the owl's body. "The project refutes the idea that computer graphics must be cold, hard-edged high-tech imagery," said Peach.

Known for its exclusive Academy Award-winning Digital Scene Simulation (sm) process, Digital Productions was responsible for visual effects in THE LAST STARFIGHTER and 2010. Digital productions was recently purchased by Omnibus Computer Graphics, Inc., a Toronto-based company. □

The computer-animated owl seen in the title sequence of LABYRINTH; Digital Scene Simulation (sm) by Digital Productions of Los Angeles.



Cameron's 'Starship Troopers' straight out of Robert Heinlein

ALIENS

A 20th Century-Fox release of a Brandywine production. 7/86. 137 mins. In Color and Dolby. Director, James Cameron. Producer, Gale Anne Hurd. Executive producers, Gordon Carroll, David Giler, & Walter Hill. Screenplay by Cameron from a story by Cameron, Giler, & Hill—based on characters created by Dan O'Bannon & Ronald Shusett.

Ripley Sigourney Weaver
Newt Carrie Henn
Corporal Hicks Michael Biehn
Burke Paul Reiser

(For a complete list of cast and credits, see 164/5:11)

by Douglas Borton

Few recent genre releases have been accompanied by the level of publicity surrounding *ALIENS*. The hurricane of hype that has swirled around the movie since its premiere has been enough, apparently, to obscure *ALIENS'* all-too-obvious flaws from the view of both critics and audiences.

At nearly two and a half hours *ALIENS* is, by any reasonable standard, too long. The action is repetitive, often confusing, unremittingly noisy and headache-provoking. Most of the really engaging characters get killed off early on, leaving us to root for Ripley and her comparatively colorless comrades. The story divides none-too-neatly into two movies; the first half is a macho combat film in the vein of *OBJECTIVE, BURMA!* and *THE GREEN BERETS*, while the second half is virtually a point-by-point replay of the original *ALIEN*, with the minor improvement of substituting a lost little girl for a lost cat, but with all the other familiar elements intact. There's the computerized voice ticking off seconds to the inevitable explosion, the gross-out

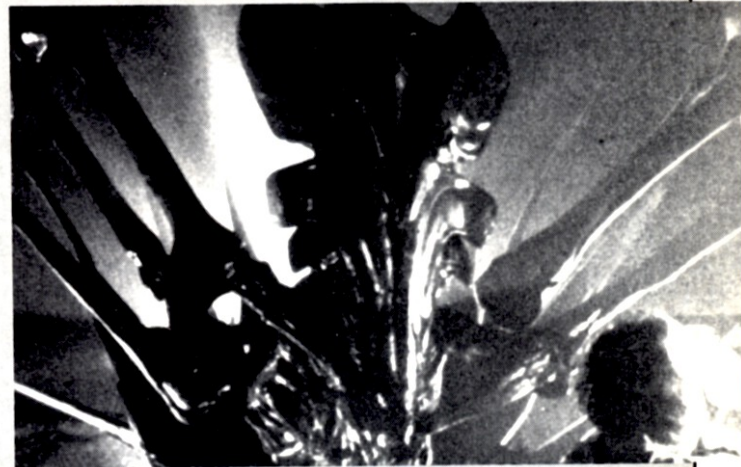
android decomposition scene, the climactic Ripley-alien clash and the out-the-airlock finale.

Perhaps most crucial, the film fails in its central challenge, namely, to convince the audience that heroine Ripley would be brave/dumb enough to face the aliens again. It's a near-impossible task, and probably should not have been attempted; there's no logical reason why Ripley had to be the centerpiece of the sequel—and plenty of good reasons why she shouldn't be. We don't *really* believe she would go back. I mean, would *you*?

This basic lapse of logic is compounded by other lapses. The Marines travel to the "Bug"-infested colony in suspended animation, presumably because their voyage is months or years long; yet once marooned on the planet, they calculate that a rescue team can reach them in a mere seventeen days. Did they travel through "hyperspace" or at faster-than-light speed? If so, then why the hibernation? If not, then how can they or anybody else reach a planet in another solar system in seventeen days? Or are the hoped-for rescuers based on a nearby planet or space station? Then why didn't *they* get sent on the mission in the first place?

When you think about it, it doesn't make much sense.

Apparently, few people *did* think about it. In the age of numbskull moviemaking—of flicks like *RAMBO* and *TOP GUN*, which combine the mindless flash of rock videos with the knee-jerk machismo of G. Gor-



The Alien Queen, the new wrinkle in James Cameron's reprise of *ALIEN*

A Lesson in *ALIENS* Biology

In hitting upon the idea for an alien queen in *ALIENS*, director James Cameron had to play fast and loose with the concept of alien biology established in the original film, directed by Ridley Scott.

The life cycle of the *ALIEN* as envisioned originally by screenwriter Dan O'Bannon is as follows: 1) Victim finds pod containing face-hugger; 2) Face-hugger senses potential host, springs out and attaches; 3) Via a tube inserted in the victim's throat, the face-hugger deposits an embryo which grows into a chest-burster; 4) Chest-burster emerges and grows into adult

alien; 5) Adult alien cocoons victims, depositing an alien larva; 6) Larva slowly eats its host alive, growing into a pod containing a face-hugger, and the cycle begins anew.

Stages 5 and 6 are only hinted at in *ALIEN*, making it easy for Cameron to insert a pod (or egg) laying Queen into the process, omitting the larval stage altogether. Instead of depositing the larval stage with cocooned victims, Cameron has the adult alien place an egg containing a face-hugger next to the cocooned victims. Cameron's biology may not be as elegant, but it serves the plot. □

don Liddy, strobe lights with rocket launchers, MTV with M-16s—*ALIENS* fits right in. But the people who gave us *THE TERMINATOR*, an intelligently crafted film that did not sacrifice story content to thrills, could have been expected to do better here.

The critics—swept up in a spiraling twister of media hype and carried off to Oz, where the Wizard remained safely hidden behind the curtains—fell all over themselves in overly intellectual apologies for what is, at best, a scary, silly little movie. *ALIENS* has been hailed as everything from the definitive feminist statement to a bold expose of the evils of "corporate greed." And the notion of "grunts in space," the interstellar infantry to the rescue, has been touted as a clever and original blending of science-fiction and combat genres.

Clever? Sure. Original? Well... maybe. But before we decide too

quickly about that, here's a little food for thought.

"I always get the shakes before a drop," says the narrator of Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, one of science-fiction literature's most widely read classics, which contains some remarkable similarities to *ALIENS*. The narrator is a trooper in—yes—an interstellar infantry. A "drop" is—hmm—a platoon's harrowing free-fall from orbiting mothership to planetary surface.

And the enemy? Why, it's a race of large insect-like aliens which the troopers dub "Bugs." (Combat is a "bug-hunt.") These loathesome creatures, which number in the hundreds, infest networks of underground tunnels, at the lowest level of which are found "the queens... obscene monsters larger than a horse and utterly immobile."

Man-to-Bug combat is made
continued on page 58

Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) and starship troopers Michael Biehn (l) and Ricco Ross in *ALIENS*, a story of interstellar combat spiced with the flavor of vintage Heinlein.





Left: Actor Jeffrey Jones in the Burmans' sixth stage of Dr. Jennings transformation into a Dark Overlord. Above: Makeup artist Bari Dreiband-Burman poses with Jones in the seventh and final makeup.

Makeup for HOWARD THE DUCK by the Burman Studio

By Ron Magid

Tom Burman and Bari Dreiband-Burman of the Burman studios created a seven-stage makeup that transformed Dr. Jennings (Jeffrey Jones) from brilliant scientist to creeping Dark Overlord in HOWARD THE DUCK. Their makeup sets the stage for the climactic go-motion creature designed and animated by Phil Tippett. Originally the makeup chores were to have been handled by the Creature Shop at ILM, but when they proved to be hard pressed with the task of creating a duck, producer Gloria Katz turned the transformation over to the Burmans, choosing them because of their superb GOONIES work for Steven Spielberg.

The Burmans were also selected for their reputation for delivering brilliant work on short order—and due to the snafus at the ILM Creature Shop, time was indeed short.

The Burmans were given about four weeks to come up with everything, including a mechanical tongue for Jones capable of steering a truck.

"They had some preliminary designs," said Tom Burman, "but they wouldn't work on film, so we redesigned it. We took the direction they liked, enhanced it and made it real." Assisting the Burmans were mechanical expert Larry Odien and production coordinator John Logan.

By stage four, Jennings is beginning to look decidedly inhuman, with the addition of increasingly prominent face and body appliances. "We wanted a slightly comic book feel to it without extending it to the point where it lost believability," said Burman.

For stage five Jones' ears were glued back. At stage six the character is re-energized by a nuclear reactor, calling for the addition of white, upswept hair and healthier-looking skin. A

hump in his back shows that his body is beginning to change, with fingernails that have burst through his gloves. For stage seven, the fingers have become more accentuated and his hump pushes through his clothes, revealing a raised spine the length of his back.

The application process took five hours with the Burmans working in tandem as a team. Tom Burman would "ballpark" the look of the makeup. Wife Bari Dreiband-Burman would concentrate on the fine detailing. "We both go back and forth and continually fine-tune each other's work," said Bari. "We switched sides constantly, completely roving around Jeffrey Jones."

Although the HOWARD THE DUCK shoot was a difficult one for the Burmans, with numerous fifteen hour days, actor Jeffrey Jones made things exceedingly pleasant, and the Burman's only regret is that they didn't get to film one incredibly elaborate five-second transformation effect, which was deemed too much of a show stopper. Using monofilament lines to pull off each successive makeup stage only lightly attached with KY Jelly, the Burmans planned to show Jones' transformation back to himself in one continuous take. Air hoses would blow away the pieces as they sloughed off, and the camera would be stopped as Jones closed his eyes and mouth to remove the contacts and false teeth. Said Bari, "It's sitting on the shelf next to the octopus from GOONIES!" □

Howard gets trapped in a world he never made, indeed

HOWARD THE DUCK

A Universal Pictures release of a Lucasfilm Ltd. production, presented by George Lucas. 8/86, 111 mins. In color and Dolby. Director, Willard Huyck. Producer, Gloria Katz. Co-producer, Robert Latham Brown. Executive producer, George Lucas. Screenplay by Willard Huyck & Gloria Katz, based on the Marvel Comics character "Howard the Duck" created by Steve Gerber. Director of photography, Richard H. Kline. Editors, Michael Chandler & Sidney Wolinsky. Music, John Barry. Additional music, Sylvester Levay. Songs, Thomas Dolby & others. Production designer, Peter Jamison. Art direction, Blake Russell & Mark Billerman. Set designers, Jim Pohl & Pamela Marcotte. Set decorator, Philip Abrahamson. Costume designer, Joe Tompkins. Sound, Agamemnon Adrianos. Sound design by Randy Thom. Visual effects, Industrial Light & Magic. Visual effects supervisor, Michael J. McAlister. Visual effects art director, Phillip Norwood. Alien monster design, Tom Burman & Bari Dreiband-Burman. Special effects supervisor, Bob MacDonald Jr.

Beverly Switzer Lea Thompson
Dr. Jennings Jeffrey Jones
Phil Blumbrutt Tim Robbins
Howard the Duck Ed Gale
Chip Zien, Tim Rose, Steve Sleep, Peter Baird,
Mary Wells, Lisa Sturz, Jordan Prentice
Lt. Welker Paul Giallardo
Ginger Moss Tommy Swerdlow

by Harry McCracken

You can kind of picture film historians of the distant future singling out HOWARD THE DUCK as the textbook example of everything that was wrong with the big-budget fantasy films of the 1980s. The George Lucas cachet provided director Willard Huyck with high-powered special effects and lavish sets, but money couldn't buy the film what it required most: a little imagination and the light touch needed to bring this kind of material off.

Those who blame the film's failure on the fact that Howard himself is all too obviously a midget in a duck suit are missing the point. Kermit the Frog is patently made of fuzzy green cloth, and Mickey Mouse of ink and paint, but because they're vivid and well-defined characters we don't mind their physical implausibility. What Howard lacks is soul. Huyck and Gloria Katz's script assumes that the idea of a wise-quacking duck is funny enough to carry the character by itself; as the movie proves over and over again, it isn't. Howard is such a wishy-washy character that he keeps getting lost in the noisy shuffle of the movie's plot.

After an opening sequence on Howard's home planet marred by too many self-indulgent references to past Lucasfilm projects,

continued on page 59

Working on the makeup's fifth stage mechanical head (right) and tongue.



Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz on HOWARD THE DUCK

By Lawrence French

Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz first became interested in making *HOWARD THE DUCK* in 1975, when George Lucas showed them the comic book. At the time Lucas owned a comic art store in New York and the three were working together on *RADIOLAND MURDERS*, a comedy/murder mystery film script set in the world of '80s radio that has never been produced. Lucas checked on the rights and found that Marvel Comics had sold them in a package to Universal-TV with *THE INCREDIBLE HULK*, and decided not to pursue it further.

Frank Price had purchased the rights for Universal. In the intervening years the rights had reverted back to Marvel and Price had moved to Columbia (where he made *KRULL*, an expensive flop), then back to Universal where as company president he ironically agreed to finance *HOWARD THE DUCK*. (When the film turned into a costly flop, a fist-fight between Price and a rival executive was rumored to have broken out in the halls of Universal. Several weeks later Price resigned his post.)

Lucas got re-involved in the project as executive producer when Huyck and Katz were shopping special effects at ILM. Lucas warned Huyck and Katz of the frustrations of working with special effects like those needed to create the duck. Said Huyck, "He told me 'You're going to go crazy, because at the end of the film you'll finally



Director Willard Huyck (l) and producer Gloria Katz.

know how to do it, and the shooting will be over.' He said it was that way on *STAR WARS*. R2-D2 would never work, he wouldn't move, he just collapsed. Finally he started to work as the shooting ended."

Though ILM's Creature Shop failed miserably in creating a believable Howard, Phil Tippett of ILM provided the film with a stunning go-motion Dark Overlord creature, looking akin to a giant scorpion. "Tippett essentially came up with the design of the creature," said Huyck. "In the script we just had an idea of some kind of terrible-looking creature, but we didn't know what." Tippett sculpted prototypes in clay and Huyck and Katz made suggestions.

Because of the project's comic book origins Huyck said he wasn't that concerned with making it all believable. "When you start with a movie about a 3 foot duck from outer space, there's a level of reality you sort of maintain," he said. "If you're doing *DOG DAY AFTERNOON*, or something like that, you probably have to deal with the logical mechanics a little more."

Though *HOWARD THE DUCK* was a big-budget picture from a

major studio, Huyck and Katz don't see their work as part of the Hollywood mainstream. "It's too peculiar," said Katz. "It's not like *GHANDI* or *OUT OF AFRICA*. It doesn't have Hollywood stateliness that I always find very stupefying. It's not respectable in any way. Within the Hollywood system we were able to make a really strange movie."

Huyck and Katz read all the *Howard the Duck* comics before embarking on the script. "The early ones that Steve Gerber did with Val Mayerick as the artist were the best," said Huyck. "We went back to look at them to find a story that would work as a movie, but couldn't." According to Huyck, Howard's creator Steve Gerber provided two pages of notes as a guide to writing the script, and watched some of the shooting.

Huyck found some of the methods of secrecy at Lucasfilm "a pain in the ass," he said. "Every page of their scripts have a code number. If they find that a script has been xeroxed, they can look at the code and know where it came from. When we got into that I said, 'Jesus, this is like the FBI! It's too much. We were much more casual about it.'"

According to Huyck, Lucas was not very involved in the filming. "He was there only three days," said Huyck. "He's interested in rock music, but the rest is not very exciting for him. He was most in evidence when we were writing the script, and made a lot of very good suggestions. In postproduction, George became our instant preview audience. Since he wasn't involved in the shooting and never saw the rushes, he was looking at it really fresh."

According to Huyck the next *STAR WARS* picture is a long way off. "Somebody asked Lucas at a staff meeting about that," said Huyck. "He said he didn't think there would be another one for five years. He's talking about doing another three movies. He's got the ideas and the stories."

Both Huyck and Katz complained of the rushed schedule in finishing *HOWARD THE DUCK*, which didn't start shooting until November 11th,



The film's unconvincing duck was designed by Nikki Rodis-Jamero and fabricated by the ILM Creature Shop.

though Universal insisted on making it a summer release and Lucas committed to delivering it on time. Huyck credits the totally in-house capabilities of Lucasfilm for meeting the deadline.

"ILM has a printer that can print black and white film in five minutes," said Huyck. "I was editing right across from where the special effects were being done. Phil Tippett would shoot a take. I could literally walk over and say, 'What about doing this?' They'd reshoot it and that was it. Right across the hall was the sound mixing studio."

The impressive sets of *Duck World*, supervised by ILM's Mike McAllister, were built to scale inside enormous fruit storage warehouses in Richmond, California. There was no studio space in San Francisco that was large enough. The cafe set was also constructed there.

Huyck and Katz would like to do another *Duck* picture. "It took us this long to figure out how to make him work, why let someone else do it?" said Huyck. "Most of the time while we were shooting it was cold and miserable, so we said, 'He's going to Hawaii.' Somehow, we're going to get Howard to Hawaii." □

Midget Ed Gale played Howard opposite Lea Thompson as Beverly, his girl.



Cronenberg's moving, sardonic metaphor for this age of AIDS

THE FLY

A 20th Century-Fox release of a Brookfilms production. Produced by Stuart Cornfeld. 8/86, 100 mins. In color and Dolby. Director, David Cronenberg. Co-producers: Marc-Ami Boyman & Kip Ohman. Screenplay by: Charles Edward Pogue & David Cronenberg from a story by George Langelaan. Director of photography, Mark Irwin. Editor, Ronald Sanders. Music, Howard Shore. Production designer, Carol Spier. Art director, Rolf Harvey. Set decorator, Elinor Rose Galbraith. Set designer, James McAteer. Sound, Gerry Humphreys. Costumes, Denise Cronenberg. The Fly created and designed by Chris Walas Inc. Assistant director, John Board. Casting, Deirdre Bowen.

Seth Brundle Jeff Goldblum
Veronica Quaife Geena Davis
Stathis Borans John Getz
Tawny Joy Boushel
Dr. Cheevers Les Carlson

by Charles D. Leayman

Ever since *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN* (1975), director David Cronenberg has plumbed the murky depths where science, art, and "the flesh" inscrutably overlap. What critic Robin Wood once railed against as Cronenberg's alleged "disgust" with sex appears in retrospect as a profound ambivalence on the director's part toward the body's potential for both treachery and redemption. With *THE FLY*, Canada's most celebrated *auteur* whips his febrile concerns and surrealist methods into a sober, moving, and at times horribly funny metaphor in this age of AIDS (a disease which Cronenberg's work might indeed have bodied forth).

Like Philip Kaufman's *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*



Goldblum's charged performance as Seth has been mentioned as an Oscar contender.

ERS (1978), *THE FLY* is more a contemporary gloss on its source material than a simple re-make. Kurt Neumann's 1958 adaptation of George Langelaan's short story assumed a firmly bourgeois context of marriage, family, and industrial research. Electronics scientist David Hedison discovers the secret of breaking down matter and transporting it through space; a housefly accidentally accompanies his self-transportation and the result is a monstrous hybrid of both subjects. The "return of the repressed" (that crucial tenet of

horror genre criticism) emerges in full force: Hedison and his wife's idyllic existence succumbs to an insectoid underside that turns their suburban home into a vast fly-trap. (The image of a refined Patricia Owens lunging about her living-room, butterfly net in hand, knocking over lamps in pursuit of a white-headed household pest, sums up the delicious absurdism that prompted French filmmaker Georges Franju (*EYES WITHOUT A FACE*, *JUDEX*) to cite *THE FLY* as a favorite work.)

By contrast, Cronenberg's ver-

sion has an edgy, skeptical, singles bar ambience, where careers out-distance feelings in the race to escape loneliness. Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum) and Veronica Quaife (Geena Davis) meet at an exhibition sponsored by Brundle's employer, the "Bartok" corporation (note the three-letter word nestled within the name). Veronica's interest is at first purely pragmatic: she wants a juicy scoop for *Particle* magazine, whose editor (John Getz) is a former lover. Brundle, all quiet resolve and high-strung pride, convinces her to wait for something better, namely a full-length book climaxed by his own telepod tripping.

Unexpectedly, the pair's budding romance develops an emphatic, tender eroticism that's relatively rare with Cronenberg. But though we're far from notions of "disgust," a nagging "wages of sin" inevitability persists, as if the director, while willing the couple's happiness, can barely wait to rend them apart. In a drunken bout of misguided jealousy that blinds him to the pod's extra passenger, Seth undergoes teleportation. Soon he begins to sprout coarse black hairs and to exhibit unaccustomed athletic prowess. Excessive amounts of sugar become a dietary staple; he rants about "purity" of mind and body, about the need

continued on page 60

A low-key feminist shocker from New Zealand

DARK OF THE NIGHT

A Castle Hill release. New Zealand, 1984, 88 mins. In color. Director, Gaylene Preston. Producers: Robin Laing and Gaylene Preston. Screenplay: Geoff Murphy, Graham Tetley, and Gaylene Preston, based on the story "Mr. Wrong" by Elizabeth Jane Howard. Director of photography, Thom Burstyn. Camera operator, Alun Bollinger. Art director, Mike Becroft. Editor, Simon Reece. Sound, Ken Saville. Music, Jonathan Crayford.

Meg Heather Bolton
Mr. Wrong David Letch
Samantha Margaret Umbers
Val Suzanne Lee
Bruce Gary Stalker
Wayne Danny Mulheron
Mary Carmichael Perry Piercy
Clive Philip Gordon
Mr. Whitehorn Michael Haigh
Mrs. Alexander Kate Harcourt

by Vincent J. Bossone

About to embark on a holiday visit to Mum and Dad and in need of reliable transportation, a shy young clerk purchases a used Jaguar for next to nothing. But as we and she are quick to ascertain, the car is haunted. The poltergeist in

question is the Jag's previous owner, brutally murdered a decade ago by a psychotic hitchhiker. When said psycho (David Letch) turns up again to terrorize our heroine (Heather Bolton), the friendly female ghost materializes to give the villain his comeuppance.

As slight and unremarkable as the storyline is, this low-key effort from New Zealand (also known as *MR. WRONG*) has something going for it that sets it apart from the spate of slasher films which have glutted the market for several seasons. That "something" is the perspective of a distaff producer/director team who have fleshed out their protagonist, imbuing her with an intelligence and sensitivity rarely glimpsed in the character's Hollywood counterparts. Indeed, the fact that our heroine is not particularly comely and is not

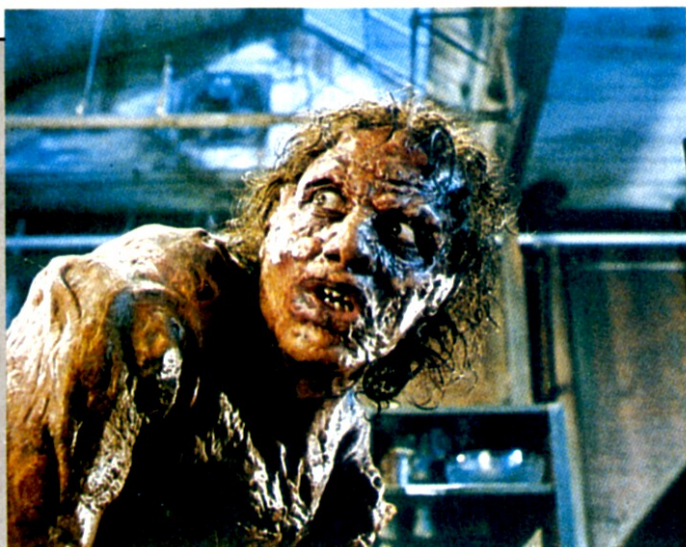
inclined to disrobe every five minutes constitutes cinematic groundbreaking for this sub-genre. Even the introduction of a romantic suitor does not signal a "young stud to the rescue" scenario; the young lady will confront her nemesis alone, thank you.

DARK OF THE NIGHT, unfortunately, may have difficulty finding its audience. Though it does boast a couple of effective "frissons," the film's relaxed pace and a narrative devoid of a gore/sex come-on may prove too tame for the adolescent draw seemingly so necessary for commercial viability in this genre.

With the stateside release of *THE QUIET EARTH* and now of *DARK OF THE NIGHT*, New Zealand, like Australia, may prove fertile ground for the seedling of imaginative cinema. □



Heather Bolton and her haunted car.



Left: Goldblum as the Quasimodo like Brundle-Fly. Right: The final insectoid metamorphosis, makeup supervised by Chris Walas.

After a lengthy, forced hiatus, THE FLY marks Cronenberg's return to directing.

By Bruce Kirkland

For auteur horror director David Cronenberg, remaking THE FLY obviously meant more than just fashioning a science fiction thriller for summer consumption. It satisfied a primal artistic urge.

Cronenberg wanted something on celluloid that justified his gut level appreciation of the original concept behind George Langelaan's story and Kurt Neumann's 1958 film. "I know this is the movie you wanted to see in the first place," he said.

But THE FLY also satisfied a more simple obsession: the need for Cronenberg to write and direct movies. Filmmaking has occupied his life since he gave up his insect collection, university, guitar strumming, and fear of the unknown 15 years ago. Cronenberg had spent more than two years between THE DEAD ZONE and his version of THE FLY trying to get another movie made.

The film was TOTAL RECALL, based on a story by science fiction author Philip K. Dick. Mercurial producer Dino DeLaurentiis was interested enough to bring it right to the brink of reality. The production was ready to roll in Italy. Cronenberg's favorite crew members—the core of Canadian technicians Cronenberg has worked with since his days on THE BROOD, SCANNERS and VIDEODROME—had packed their bags and were eager for adventure.

But the project collapsed. DeLaurentiis, who had worked smoothly with Cronenberg on

THE DEAD ZONE, suddenly disagreed with Cronenberg's artistic decisions. "We went through a dozen-plus rewrites before we both found out that I wanted one movie and Dino wanted another," said Cronenberg.

"I suppose, in a way, it was a classic situation. I always knew it could happen. I didn't take it personally. With Dino, it was a very honest disagreement and we were both willing to continue to make the movie—if we each had it our own way. He felt that what I wanted to do would not make a good movie by his standards, whatever they happen to be. Obviously though, we made THE DEAD ZONE together so there is a place we can meet.

"It was a long wait for nothing," continued Cronenberg. "What was weird was working so long on your own project and realizing it might well be made by someone else. That was very strange. It was a good lesson, I suppose. But now I've had that happen once and I don't need it again." The experience steered Cronenberg. It toughened him for working on THE FLY. But he went through a strange transition first, a personal dead zone.

"What is strange is that I started thinking: 'Gee, maybe I only dreamed that I made movies. I used to be a director. Or did I? Maybe it was only a fantasy!' You really do start to feel like that when you haven't worked for a long time."

Of course, Mel Brooks and producer Stuart Cornfeld came to the rescue, offering Cronen-

berg the chance to re-write his own remake of THE FLY. The Canadian was given wide powers by his Hollywood bosses to turn the project (which had been started by another director) into a true Cronenberg film, with a generous \$15 million budget (far more than Cronenberg ever spent on any of his own original creations).

"Part of the understanding I had with Brooks and Cornfeld was that I didn't want to shoot their script, the script that had been prepared for the other director. In my discussions with them about THE FLY, I told them 'If you don't like it, you'd better tell me now, because I don't want another misunderstanding like TOTAL RECALL.' On THE FLY, that all worked out."

But the director doubted himself during his first few days on the elaborate sets at Toronto International Studios. "When I finally started this one, I think I was a little rusty, at least in terms of the quickness with which I would perceive little technical things," Cronenberg admitted. "But I had lots of people around me, all of whom have been working in the last couple of years, and they reminded me. It's like riding a bicycle. No, it's like falling off a bicycle. If you've fallen off once, you can fall off anytime."

One of the people Cronenberg had with him was Chris Walas, who headed a special effects crew of 10 brought in from his headquarters in San Rafael, California. One Walas effect, a monkey-cat (see

16/4/5:95) got edited out of the final film. The exotic abortion, one of Goldblum's failed experiments, owed a lot in style to Walas' work for GREMLINS.

Walas followed Cronenberg's lead in developing the special effects for the story, which takes Goldblum on an extraordinary metamorphosis from man to mutant insect. "That's not an easy thing to do," said Walas. "I don't know of any other film that has tried to do it because it asks a lot of the filmmakers, the technology, and the audience. Somebody had guts on this show! I think it's the guy with the money." □

David Cronenberg directs THE FLY, the Canadian horror auteur's biggest critical and commercial success.



Another Carpenter film in step with the Hollywood herd

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

A 20th Century-Fox release. 7/86, 99 mins. In color. Director, John Carpenter. Producer, Larry J. Franco. Executive producers, Paul Monash & Keith Barish. Screenplay by Gary Goldman & David Z. Weinstein. Screenplay adapted by W.D. Richter. Director of photography, Dean Cundey. Editors, Mark Warner, Steve Mirkovich, & Edward A. Warschika. Special visual effects by Richard Edlund. Music by John Carpenter. Production designer, John J. Lloyd. Art director, Les Gobreuege. Set director, George R. Nelson. Costumes by April Ferry. Sound, Thomas Causey. Assistant director, Larry Franco. Casting, Joanna Merlin.

Jack Burton.....	Kurt Russell
Gracie Law.....	Kim Cattrall
Wang Chi.....	Dennis Dun
Lo Pan.....	James Hong
Egg Shen.....	Victor Wong
Margo.....	Kate Burton
Miao Yin.....	Suzee Pai
Eddie Lee.....	Donald Li
Thunder.....	Carter Wong
Rain.....	Peter Kwong
Lighting.....	James Pax

by Randal Graham

Above all else the ancient Greeks admired general excellence and called it *arete*. Certain films have special qualities—*arete*, if you will—that separate them from the Hollywood herd. John Carpenter's early films such as *DARK STAR* (with Dan O'Bannon), *HALLOWEEN*, and especially *ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13* evinced—despite their low budgets and technical limitations—qualities that transcended the standard formula. (George Miller's original *MAD MAX* is another sterling example, despite a plague of low-budget warts.)

But with commercial success (*HALLOWEEN* is still the biggest grossing independent film of all time) Carpenter's artistic vision seemed to cloud. Although he's too talented to make bad films (with the exception, per-

haps, of *THE FOG*), his later efforts, despite higher budgets and slicker production, have not matched the quality of his early work.

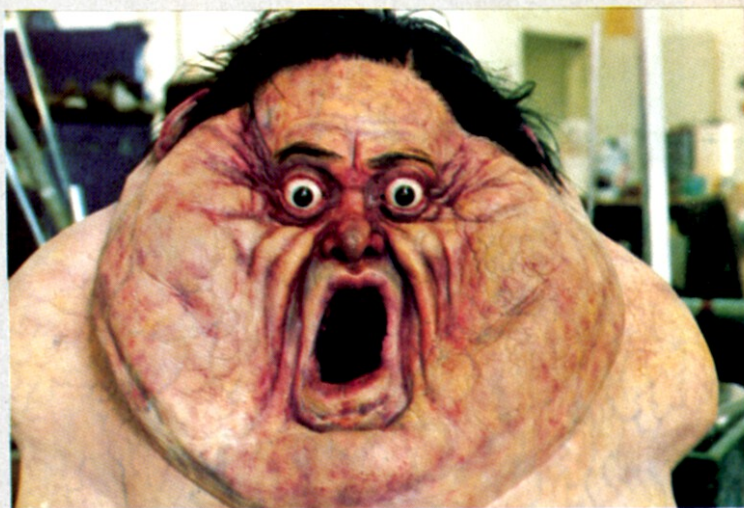
Carpenter's not alone in this artistic regression: I prefer Spielberg's *JAWS* and *DUEL* over the cloying *E.T.*; and I suspect that *AMERICAN GRAFITTI* will be the best film George Lucas ever makes. Success in Hollywood—through some sinister osmosis—seems to pollute vision and artistry. The director becomes cautious and comfortable, and the imagination seems to shrivel even as the budget and mania for special effects swell to gargantuan proportions.

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA was adapted by W. D. Richter (the director of *BUCKAROO BANZAI*); it's a parody of a half-dozen Hollywood genres and it's entertaining and funny—probably Carpenter's most enjoyable film in some time. Jack Burton (Kurt Russell) is a quasi-macho truck driver pulled into a Chinese wonderland of myth and menace in the subterranean depths of San Francisco's Chinatown. He battles Chinese thugs, ghosts, and demons while helping his friend Wang (Dennis Dun) recover his bride from the evil clutches of Lo Pan (James Hong), a 2000-year-old ghost.

Russell affects a John Wayne drawl and plays Burton as a caricature of machismo, swaggering his way into deadly trouble like a bull on roller skates. Russell

continued on page 56

Kurt Russell as Indiana Jones-styled Jack Burton, a winning comic performance.



Steve Johnson on the makeup for BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA.

By Les Paul Robley

The Creature Shop of Boss Films, Richard Edlund's effects house, created the assortment of monsters and makeup effects seen in John Carpenter's *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA*. The single most difficult effect was that of the flying, all-seeing eye, which had a face capable of making a wide range of expressions, including over thirty working eyes that blinked.

The 16-inch in diameter creature was constructed 8 inches larger than it appeared on film in order to encompass all the rods and cables which controlled its expressions, and was composited using blue screen. "Since we were optically inserting it, we had the freedom to make the eye as big as we needed," said Steve Johnson, the chief designer who also supervised the Creature Shop's work on the film.

"Originally I wanted it to be about four feet wide and got laughed right out of our initial meeting," Johnson continued. "I wanted the ability to get a lot of hands and arms inside manipulating things, similar to what we did with *Onionhead*." Johnson refers to the green ghost he designed for *GHOSTBUSTERS*, shot against black with people behind drapes controlling it. Since the floating eye was to be achieved by moving the camera in relation to the eye and blue screen, a four-foot-wide eye would have required unbelievably long tracking shots for scenes where the creature had to fly thirty feet toward the

camera.

"It was like building a ship inside a bottle," Johnson recalled. "It was a maze of wires and cables, one of the most complicated things I've ever seen." The Creature Shop made two halves—one for front shots and one for back—so they didn't have to fit the cables inside an enclosed globe. The back of the eye appeared more alien and organic and was only used in one shot. Up to 20 puppeteers manned different aspects of the creature, all under the supervision of first technician Screaming Mad George.

Some of the eyes were pneumatically operated. A few were restageable, whereby crewmembers repositioned them between shots, making them appear to look in different directions. Others were remotely operated via radio-controlled mechanisms. Sometimes these would break or pick up interfer-

Makeup technician Screaming Mad George (his legal name) with shell mechanics for the flying eye. Below: The eye as seen in the finished film.





Boss Films created Thunder, one of Lo-Pan's Masters of Death, who inflates like a balloon. Far left: Stage 3, named for Jackie Gleason. Left: Steve Johnson works on the mechanized head. Above: As seen in the film, full body. Right: The foam head prior to hair punching and final detailing.



ence on the set, causing some of the eyes to comically look about in all directions. The support rod, cables and wires to operate the creature were connected through a 13 inch hole in the blue screen, an innovation by cameraman Bill Neal. Since the creature itself obscured its own support and connections, further mattes were unnecessary.

A hand puppet was substituted for the scene where the beast licks its wound with a massive tongue. The hand held onto an eyeball which was attached to the end of the tongue by optic nerves. An oversized set piece provided the background in order to match the larger scale of the puppet. "The idea was for the tongue to snake out of the mouth," said Johnson. "Then the eye would slowly ease out of the tongue, like a tube telescoping out of a tube. The eye looks around for the wound and begins licking it." Unfortunately, with director John Carpenter's quick pacing, the effect happens so fast it's difficult to distinguish the hand puppet's subtle

movements.

For the stabbing scene, the eye was the proper medicine-ball size. A smaller one was substituted when Russell hurled it off his sword. These were shot at Fox studios using the practical stage lighting. The eye was required to cross its eyes and react in surprise. Johnson tried to incorporate a humorous effect which never made it past the storyboard stage. Before the eye gets stabbed, Johnson wanted it to flip over so that the face would have a completely opposite expression. Johnson had wanted to use the idea once before for the subway ghost in *GHOST-BUSTERS*, but it was vetoed in that film as well.

Compared to the eye, designing the Wildman proved the least of Johnson's worries. "It was a standard man-in-a-suit costume," he admitted. "I had just made 50 of the exact same kinds of suits for *GREYSTOKE*, so it was almost like an assembly kit with a slightly different look." Boss Films' art director George Jensen said the concept origi-

nated from a picture John Carpenter found in an old *National Geographic* magazine. The photo showed an ancient mummified person discovered in an Icelandic cave.

Creature Shop artist Kevin Brennan did further drawings of the Wildman, and Johnson submitted two sculptures to get it approved. Johnson prefers to work in 3-dimensions with small clay models since they are actually faster for him to make than a sketch. Carpenter liked Jensen's initial design, but Johnson thought it looked too human and didn't take full advantage of his shop's capabilities. He also preferred Brennan's drawings to the eventual *GREYSTOKE*-like suits because the thin hair enabled one to see the actual wrinkles in the skin.

The final design called for an articulated face with various arm extensions. Costume designer Theresa Burkett contributed to the interior padding which consisted of foam rubber covered with spandex (a two-way slippery stretch fabric). This was attached to a body suit, dyed flesh color, to which a technician tied one hair at a time.

Artisan Dave Matherly built a self-contained device for a stunt head which curled the lip up and pushed the brow down when the Wildman opened its mouth. Makio Kida constructed a mechanical head for closeups which blinked its eyes and pulled back the sides of its mouth. A fleshy curling tongue was mated to a speedometer cable mechanism. Operators pulled, pushed or twisted the cable and the movement was correspondingly transmitted. The creature's brows used a universal movement

similar to the kind Rick Baker employed in *GREYSTOKE*. Thin tubes in the mouth permitted the Wildman to salivate on cue. It was all a lot of work for a creature that is barely glimpsed in the final film.

The other monster creating big trouble for crewmembers was a semi-reptilian, bug-eyed sewer creature which has one of Russell's party for chop suey. Initial designs had it resemble a real Chinese dragon. Noble Craig, a triple amputee, worked inside the creature. His own head stuck out at the back of the beast's throat, appearing as if he was swallowed whole. A tongue was sculpted and attached with a spring to Craig's head, so when

continued on page 56

Sorcerer Lo-Pan in an early stage of the application of a prosthetic old-age makeup designed by Steve Johnson.



FILM RATINGS

ALF

Executive producer, Bernie Brillstein. NBC-TV, Fall '86 weekly series, 30 mins. With: Max Wright, Anne Schedeen.

Its co-creator is Ed Weinberger of TAXI, and its star is Max Wright of BUFFALO BILL, but the star of this family sitcom is an overgrown muppet, which places the series firmly in the "gimmicky" category. The gimmick played out within the first month, and surprises have been short in supply. The genre references for the "Alien Life Form" title character are minimal. ● BK

BLUE VELVET

Directed by David Lynch. DeLaurentis Entertainment Group, 9/86, 120 mins. With: Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper, Laura Dern.

Cross ERASERHEAD with a harsh R-rated remake of SHADOW OF A DOUBT and you may be able to conjure something of the welcome-to-my-nightmare quality of David Lynch's disturbing, disorienting, and wholly devastating mystery/romance. But basically this film is *sui generis*: there simply hasn't been anything like it before on the American commercial screen—ever. After a sorry sojourn on the space patrol, Lynch settles back to earth and projects a truly imaginative universe, namely the one between his ears. Moments of hallucinatory wonder vie with stark terror, sleazy voyeurism with pristine innocence, hair-raising suspense with cornball dialogue, classical Hollywood convention with avant garde

A harem of virgin brides bathe in an alien sex rite in BREEDERS.



Adam Arkin in FULL MOON HIGH, makeup by Steve Neill.

usurpations—in short, the kind of movie that leaves you tongue-tied when friends ask "What's it about?"

Kyle MacLachlan, the choir-boy-faced young actor last seen worm-born on DUNE, is perfect as the not-so-naïve Jeffrey Beaumont. Dennis Hopper as the manic-depressive, ether-sniffer Frank Booth is evil incarnate. Just as Lynch discerns the fetishism latent in Bobby Vinton's clean-teen rock hit ("she wore blue velvet..."), he takes his psyche chainsaw and bores down on the slime in small-town American Gothic. The introductory hook is not to be resisted: strolling through a backyard shortcut, young Jeffrey comes across an ant-covered ear. Then things start to get weird.

●●● Thomas Doherty

THE BOY WHO COULD FLY

Directed by Nick Castle. 20th Century-Fox, 7/86, 103 mins. With: Jay Underwood, Lucy Deakins, Fred Gwynne.

A charming fantasy of love, striving, and dreams. Milly (Lucy Deakins), a new kid in town, becomes friends with Eric (Jay Underwood), the boy next door—a seemingly autistic teenager whom the authorities want to institutionalize. There is much more to Eric than meets the eye. Through love, in the best fairytale tradition, Milly is able to reach him. The film suffers from slow pacing and is too long. The Peter Pan-like flying scenes are well-handled. ●● DS

BREEDERS

Directed by Tim Kincaid. Wizard Video, 3/86. With: Teresa Farley, Lance Lewman, Frances Raines, Leanne Baker.

Bad acting, weak special effects, desultory direction, and an incoherent, derivative script sabotage the ultimate

exploitation film idea: Rapists from Outer Space. The idea, implicit in many fantastic films, is made explicit here as a bug-eyed monster (whose black rubber costume appears to have been stitched together out of old raincoats and galoshes) impregnates nubile New York City virgins.

The two leads—a woman doctor (Teresa Farley) and a detective (Lance Lewman)—spend most of their time awkwardly standing around displaying their lack of acting ability. Each female victim has about three minutes of character development before she is assaulted. The women, oddly enough, come off better than anyone else in the picture. They actually seem like real people. Though she has little dialogue, Frances Raines makes a definite visual impression.

Efforts at suspense, humor, gore effects and shocks all fall flat. The chief entertainment value of the film comes from comparing the tan lines on the various victims. Tasteless and uninteresting direct-to-home video sleaze. ● David Wilt

DEADLY FRIEND

Directed by Wes Craven. Warner Bros., 10/86, 99 mins. With: Matthew Laborteaux, Kristy Swanson, Michael Sharrett, Anne Twomey, Anne Ramsey.

Wes Craven's new shocker starts out as decent science fiction but turns into rather mediocre horror. A boy genius (Matthew Laborteaux) inserts logic circuits from his homemade robot into the brain-dead body of his girlfriend (Kristy Swanson) and—voilà!—we have another uninspired version of FRANKENSTEIN as the girl gains supernatural strength but lacks moral scruples.

A particularly ridiculous scene of a basketball smashing

Anne Twomey's head off almost earned the film an X-rating without being anything more than risible and gratuitous. The few genuine shocks come from Craven's by now trademark nightmare scenes, but on this one he's lost his way from Elm Street. ● DKF

DEATH WARMED UP

Directed by David Blyth. Vestron Video, 4/86, 83 mins. With: Michael Hurst, Margaret Umbers, Norelle Scott, William Upjohn, Gary Day.

A 1984 New Zealand punk music video/horror film now available on videocassette. Dr. Howell (Gary Day) experiments on the son (Michael Hurst) of his colleague, injecting the boy with a serum that makes him kill his parents, a la STRANGE BEHAVIOR. When the boy gets out of the loony bin 7 years later, he sets out to revenge himself on Howell, who has established a hospital on an island where he is creating strange demented creatures with swelling heads, including Bruno (QUIET EARTH) Lawrence, a hunchback whose brain explodes in closeup while he foams at the mouth. Makeup is by Bryony Hurden and Rosalind McCorquodale. Later, the entire population of psycho patients breaks out and kills off nearly the entire cast. Film does nothing for New Zealand's growing reputation for quality genre productions. ● JPH

FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR

Directed by Randal Kleiser. Buena Vista, 7/86, 90 mins. With: Joey Cramer, Veronica Cartwright, Cliff DeYoung.

For once there's a movie to which grown-ups can drag their kids rather than the other way around. The best Disney live action film of recent years has to its credit the fascinating

story of a child's nightmarish loss of identity, told in a non-placatory manner by director Randal Kleiser. The film loses momentum halfway through when the studio deemed it was time to begin catering to the younger set. Particularly irritating is the alien ship's computerized voice. They've replaced the "Tron"-sounding one used in trailers with an obnoxious squeal by an uncredited Pee Wee Herman. But the intelligently-crafted first half hour should hold your interest. ●●● LPR

FRIDAY THE 13TH—PART VI

Directed by Tom McLoughlin. Paramount, 8/86, 87 mins. With: Thom Mathews, Jennifer Cooke, David Kagen.

Horror's most famous generic villain (no actor required—just a stunt man in a mask) puts on his hockey mask, steps out of the penalty box, and wipes out another cast of no-talent unknowns. His saving grace: he includes among his victims several yuppies, and the irritating Ron Palillo of WELCOME BACK KOTTER. The movie finally concedes the supernatural as a basis for Jason, but the special effects are now obvious, along with the fact that with a climax every few minutes, this cycle is the horror equivalent of bad music videos. ● BK

FULL MOON HIGH

Directed by Larry Cohen. Orion Pictures, 8/86, 93 mins. With: Adam Arkin, Roz Kelly, Elizabeth Hartman, Ed McMahon.

This 1980 werewolf spoof made its belated New York debut in August during Public Theatre's salute to Larry Cohen. It has an unfinished look as if money ran out before linking sequences could be filmed. When Alan Arkin shows up in the last 20 minutes,

Jason in FRIDAY THE 13TH—PART VI: JASON LIVES!



FILM RATINGS

it takes on an improv feel.

Tony (Adam Arkin) accompanies his father (Ed McMahon) to Rumania and gets bitten by a werewolf. He returns to his high school, Full Moon High, where he's the hope of the football team. However, before he can play in the big game, his father dies from accidentally shooting himself. Tony decides to leave town to protect his friends from his transformed self, although he never does anything worse than bite people on their backsides. Twenty years later he returns, passing himself off as his own son.

There are comedy turns by Demond Wilson, Louis Nye, Pat Morita, Tom Aldredge, Kenneth Mars and standup comedians Bill Kirchenbauer and Bob Saget, but somehow most of them aren't very funny. While it might seem a natural double bill with TEEN WOLF, FULL MOON HIGH has more in common with TRANSYLVANIA 6-5000, another genre comedy dud. The werewolf makeup is poor, and would never have been able to compete with its contemporaries, THE HOWLING and AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON. **○ JPH**

FUZZBUCKET

Directed by Mick Garris. ABC-TV (The Disney Sunday Movie), 5/86, 60 mins. With: Chris Hebert, Phil Fondacaro, Joe Regaluto, Wendy Phillips, Robyn Lively.

This is a leadenly paced, hour-long Disney show aimed at children. The parents (Joe Regaluto and Wendy Phillips) of a 12 year-old (Chris Hebert) don't believe he has an invisible friend named Fuzzbucket (Phil Fondacaro). The kid gets into all sorts of trouble until the furry creature finally becomes visible, at which point the boy runs off to see where his fuzzy friend lives.

The creature and his friends resemble midget Morlocks with benign, doglike faces and live in an underground lair. There is a syrupy moral, with Fuzzbucket giving the kids' parents presents, which they think are from each other, thus patching up a fight referred to but not seen. Directed by Mick Garris, who story-edited similar material for Spielberg's mindless AMAZING STORIES. **○ JPH**

LOST HORIZON

Directed by Frank Capra. Columbia Pictures, 8/86, 132 mins (restored version). With: Ronald Colman, Jane Wyatt, Edward Everett Horton, Thomas Mitchell.

Disastrous sneak previews in 1936 cowed studio heads into axing 24 minutes of footage from the film Frank Capra touted as his "supreme achievement." Many critics and audi-

	●●●●	●●●	●●	●	○			
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	POOR			
FILM TITLE	FSC	DKF	JPH	BK	AM	LPR	DS	
ALF /Bernie Brillstein NBC-TV, weekly, 30 mins.			●	●	●		●	
ALIENS /James Cameron Fox, 7/86, 137 mins.	●●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	
AMAZING STORIES /Steven Spielberg NBC-TV, weekly series, 30 mins.			●●	●	○		●	
AURORA ENCOUNTER /Jim McCullough New World, 9/86, 90 mins.		●	○	●		●		
BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA / John Carpenter. Fox, 7/86, 99 mins.	●	●	●●	●	●	●	●●●	
THE BOY WHO COULD FLY / Nick Castle. Fox, 7/86, 103 mins.	●●●	●●●	●	●	●●	●●	●●	
CRITTERS /Stephen Herek New Line Cinema, 4/86, 86 mins.	●●	●●	●●	●	●	●●	●●	
DEADLY FRIEND /Wes Craven Warner Bros, 10/86, 99 mins.	●	●	●	●		●		
DEMONS /Lamberto Bava Ascot Ent., 6/86, 88 mins.		●	●	●		○	●●	
FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR / Randal Kleiser. Buena Vista, 7/86, 90 mins.	●●	●●	●●	●	●	●●		
THE FLY /David Cronenberg Fox, 8/86, 100 mins.	●●●●	●●●	●●	●	●●	●●	●●	
THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE / John Musker. Buena Vista, 7/86, 80 mins.	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●	●●●	●●●	
HOWARD THE DUCK /Willard Hyuck Universal, 8/86, 111 mins.	○		●●	○		●	●●	
INVADERS FROM MARS /Tobe Hooper Cannon, 5/86, 100 mins.	●●	●	●	●	○	●	●	
LABYRINTH /Jim Henson Tri-Star, 6/86, 101 mins.	●●	●	●●●	○	●	●●	●●	
LINK /Richard Franklin Cannon, 10/86, 103 mins.	●	●●		●		●●		
THE MANHATTAN PROJECT / Marshall Brickman. 6/86, 117 mins.	●●●●	●●●	○	●●	●	●●	●●	
MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE /Stephen King DEG, 7/86, 97 mins.	○	●	●●	●	○		●	
PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED / Francis Coppola. Tri-Star, 10/86, 104 mins.	●●●	●●	●●●	●	●●	●●●	●	
POLTERGEIST II /Brian Gibson UA/MGM, 5/86, 90 mins.	○	●●	●●	○		●	●	
PSYCHO III /Anthony Perkins Universal, 7/86, 96 mins.	●●	●	●	●		●	●	
SHORT CIRCUIT /John Badham Tri-Star, 5/86, 98 mins.	●●	●●	●●●●	○		●	●●	
SPACECAMP /Harry Winer Fox, 6/86, 107 mins.	●	●			○	○	●	
TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2 / Tobe Hooper. Cannon, 8/86, 95 mins.	○	●	●	○		●	●	
THE TOXIC AVENGER /Herz & Weil Troma Inc., 4/86, 81 mins.			○	●		○	●●	
VAMP /Richard Wenk New World, 7/86, 94 mins.	●		●●	○		●	●●	

FSC/Frederick S. Clarke DKF/Dennis K. Fischer JPH/Judith P. Harris BK/Bill Kelley
AM/Allen Malmquist LPR/Les Paul Robley DS/Dan Scapperotti

ences backed the director's view, although edited TV versions made one wonder why. Now, restored by the AFI, the movie may still miss the mark as a masterpiece, but the restored footage—mostly character bits and philosophical dialogue—restores sweep and cohesion.

A plane crash dumps five world-weary evacuees in a Shangri-La nestled in the Tibetan mountains. Today, some of the acting and comedic touches seem pure hambone and the gleaming "moderne" sets a bit kitschy, but who could quibble with such a seductive utopian theme, Colman's world-class savoir-faire,

or one of movies' most haunting finales?

●●● Stephen Rebello

MONSTER DOG

Directed by Clyde Anderson. Trans World Entertainment Video, 6/86. With: Alice Cooper, Victoria Vera.

Great title, but old-hat plot hampers rock singer Alice Cooper's comeback attempt in this 1985 Spanish production. Cooper plays a rock star who returns to his hometown to shoot a video and is accused of carrying the same werewolf curse his father did. The first half hour seems promising, but the film never delivers.

The monster dog, wisely shown only briefly, is a stiff

puppet head by Carlo de Marchis, whose other special effects are barely adequate. Overall production values are good (picture appears to have been at least partially shot in the U.S., despite the Spanish crew) and Cooper carries his role well, but writer/director Anderson (possibly a pseudonym for producer Carlos Aured) fails to come up with the kind of exploitative thrills the title leads one to anticipate.

○ David Wilt

NAME OF THE ROSE

Directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud. 20th Century-Fox, 9/86, 130 mins. With: Sean Connery, F. Murray Abraham.

Jean-Jacques Annaud's film

is a shallow, pompous adaptation of Umberto Eco's best-selling tale of violent death at a 14th century Italian monastery, but a unique, visually compelling horror film. Eco's philosophical and historical insight has been mostly stripped away, leaving a rather ordinary detective story, complete with Sherlockian protagonist, secret passages, hidden messages and numerous horrible deaths and suspects.

The film's visual imagery, though, is always interesting, always foreboding, and always richly evocative of the grim, exceptionally dark age Annaud strives to create. What lingers in the mind are the many striking horrific images, like the gruesome corpse of a chalk-white, obese monk found floating in the bathwater. Remarkable macabre makeup and intelligent acting (particularly by Sean Connery as the sleuthing monk and Ron Perlman as a crazed hunchback) make the monastery a fascinating, vividly disturbing little world.

Directors of more traditional horror fare would be well advised to study Annaud's effective use of restrained (but enormously potent) gore.

●●●● Harry McCracken

NIGHT OF THE CREEPS

Directed by Fred Dekker. Tri-Star Pictures, 8/86, 88 mins. With: Jason Lively, Jill Whitlow, Tom Atkins, Steve Marshall.

This crept into one of Manhattan's largest movie theatres with no advance ballyhoo, replacing HOWARD THE LAME DUCK. It is a surprisingly good homage to THEY CAME FROM WITHIN (the heroine's last name is even Cronenberg) and manages to ring some refreshing changes on the tired old zombie formula.

A nicely done black and white prologue set in 1959 shows the landing of an extraterrestrial canister containing the Creeps of the title. They attack a college boy, who is kept cryogenically frozen for 27 years until his body is stolen as a college prank. He turns out to be a carrier.

The Creeps are 10-inch-long black slugs that move as fast as rats or roaches. They hop into people's mouths, burrow into their brains and lay eggs, killing their hosts, who walk around like zombies. When the eggs hatch, the Creeps burst out of the host's skull, and zip off to find new brains to burrow in.

Novice writer/director Fred Dekker spends too much time on the nerd heroes and their Valley Girl friends, but as compensation there are brief appearances by Dick Miller, Bruce Solomon, and especially

FILM RATINGS



The confusing robot cast of **TRANSFORMERS—THE MOVIE**.

Tom Atkins as a suicidal cop who cracks terrible jokes. The special effects by David B. Miller—who did the zombie make-up and built the Creeps—are excellent. ●● JPH

PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Tri-Star Pictures, 9/86, 104 mins. With: Kathleen Turner, Nicholas Cage, Barry Miller, Catherine Hicks.

Kathleen Turner is very good as Peggy Sue, a woman who gets to relive the crucial period of time before she got married while in high school, knowing how things will turn out if she does. (In the present day she's about to get divorced from her philandering husband.) Turner doesn't convince as a teenager, but the year 1960 is lovingly recreated and scripters Jerry Leichtling and Arlene Sarner have fun contrasting Turner's modern sexual attitudes with those of that period. Not very dramatic or inventive, the film is nonetheless lightweight fun. ●● DKF

RADIOACTIVE DREAMS

Directed by Albert Pyun. DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group, 9/86, 94 mins. With: John Stockwell, Michael Dudikoff, Lisa Blount, George Kennedy.

It's 2010, 14 years after a nuclear war. Two teenagers (John Stockwell and Michael Dudikoff) raised alone in a fallout shelter, break out and set off to fulfill their ambition of being private detectives. They rescue a girl who has stolen the keys to the last remaining nuclear device and spend the rest of the film escaping from various characters in makeup who want the keys.

Made in 1984 by director Albert Pyun after his success

with **THE SWORD AND THE SORCEROR**, the film's idea of humor is to name all the characters after authors and characters from detective fiction. The two leads are dunces, the plot is unimaginative, and the production values are nonexistent. Taken off the shelf as fodder for Dino DeLaurentiis' new distributry. ○ JPH

SCREAMPLAY

Directed by Rufus Butler Seder. Troma Inc., 9/86, 85 mins. With: Rufus Butler Seder, George Kuchar, Katy Bolger, Eugene Seder.

Rarely has so much conscious effort gone into making a movie look so bad. Writer/director/editor/matte painter Rufus Butler Seder stars in this no-budget, Troma Team regurgitation of **SUNSET BOULEVARD** as a naive, would-be slasher screenwriter whose smarmy Hollywood neighbors are being murdered according to the script he's writing. The picture's enjoyable, if somewhat overlong, as camp farce, with the requisite bad acting, corny dialogue and ridiculous plot twists. It even manages to serve up some convincingly depraved behavior and genuine suspense by the time it's through.

But the real treat here is just how awful the whole thing looks. Aware that he'd never get the money to give the film anything resembling production values, Seder opted for a bad-print-of-a-Twenties-Expressionist horror film motif. If you can get past the murky lighting and muddy cinematography, there is some damn clever framing and effective, moody staging on display. And Seder's hilarious visual non sequiturs—riots of mismatched composites and pointless rear projection shots—offer a scathing satire of special effects filmmaking. There's a great gonzo intelligence operating here. To what purpose, however, remains the film's true mystery.

●● Bob Strauss

STAND BY ME

Directed by Rob Reiner. Columbia Pictures, 7/86, 87 mins. With: Wil Wheaton, River Phoenix, Corey Feldman, Jerry O'Connell.

Those who've sworn off Stephen King movie adaptations, take heart. King's novella, *The Body*, hardly his most typical or flashy, makes the best screen transfer since *CARRIE*. The premise? A writer recalls his childhood trek with three bosom pals to view a kid's corpse. At his best, director Rob Reiner taps into sassy, funny kid performances in a touching portrait of friendship and coming-of-age in backyard America, circa 1959. At his worst, the director goes all gooey, warping King's maliciously spooky view of childhood into *ON GOLDEN POND* in blue jeans. King fans out for a gore fest may picket, and those who prefer adolescence served tougher and leaner may balk, but the "Master of Macabre" should ditch the killer trucks and direct audiences to this little gem.

●● Stephen Rebello

STARMAN

Executive producers: Henerson, Hirsch, & Douglas. ABC-TV, Fall '86 weekly series, 60 mins. With: Robert Hays, C.B. Barnes.

Judging by the first two shows, the series is just a retread of *THE FUGITIVE*, with Hays and his son (C.B. Barnes) by an unseen Earth woman on the run from a fanatical government agent (Michael Cavanaugh). Any time they get into a tight spot, all they have to do is use their magic ball bearings and everything is okay again. This doesn't seem to leave much scope for character development or suspense. Still, the supervising producer is Leon Tokatyan of the late, lamented *LOU GRANT*, so perhaps this just needs time to find its feet.

The opening episode was slow and confusing, even to someone familiar with the film. Robert Hays does a good job imitating Jeff Bridges' hesi-



Post-holocaust mutant surfers from **RADIOACTIVE DREAMS**.

tant, unaccented voice and brings to the lead his own wide eyed innocence, used to comedic effect. ● JPH

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE—PART 2

Directed by Tobe Hooper. Cannon Releasing, 8/86, 95 mins. With: Dennis Hopper, Caroline Williams, Bill Johnson, Jim Siedow.

A plodding example of the ultimate in stupid behavior by one person after another, all underscored by inappropriately Hitchcockian music. I certainly wouldn't want my life hanging by a thread while I waited to be rescued by Dennis Hopper, who is the slowest, most unreliable hero I've ever seen. Heroine Caroline Williams talks to villain Leatherface as if he were King Kong and she were Jessica Lange.

In fact, the best performance is given by a dummy built by Tom Savini and staff, which Chop-Top carries around like a doll. The effects sequences by Savini are a lot better than the rest of the film. The makeup setpiece is the skinning of a body that turns out not to be dead, which gets up and walks and talks without its face and parts of its chest and legs.

● JPH

THE TRANSFORMERS

Directed by Nelson Shin. DEG, 8/86, 86 mins. Voices: Orson Welles, Robert Stack, Leonard Nimoy.

It's an old joke, but someone finally cast Orson Welles as a planet. This was probably his last film job, being the voice for Unicron, and one imagines the sound editors trying to figure out where "Rosebud" should be placed in the script. Other famous people lent their voices to this project: Robert Stack, Leonard Nimoy, and Judd Nelson among others, and doubtless they are all either confused or embarrassed.

This hodge podge of oddities, throwing us into a strange story that juggles several running plot lines is enough to frazzle anybody's mind. Events

happen for no discernible reason, battles are waged against strange and decidedly impractical robots, and of all things, a Robot hero is killed. Correct me if I'm wrong, but how does one kill a robot?

Optimus Prime, the leader of the good-guy Autobots, is finally gunned down by the nasty Decepticon, Megatron. Prime dies and his soul is passed on to Ultra Magnus (Robert Stack), who later is also killed by Megatron, who steals the soul. Ultra Magnus is repaired by Wreck-Gar (Eric Idle) who is a junk-planet robot of no fixed loyalty, and later on, Hotrod (Judd Nelson) battles Galvatron, which is Megatron's new name after Unicron saves him from... oh, forget it. ○ Joseph Reboy

TROUBLE IN MIND

Directed by Alan Rudolph. Alive Releasing, 2/86, 111 mins. With: Kris Kristofferson, Genieve Bujold, Keith Carradine.

This does what Ridley Scott's *BLADE RUNNER* tried to do, but failed; it projects a grim, seamy vision of life in a near-future which is really a distorted mirror of the present, a post-industrial, post-modern urban wasteland of futility, despair, and all-pervading corruption. Johnny Hawkins (Kris Kristofferson) is a man with a past, which is just right for the movie-movie world of funhouse mirror *film noir* which writer/director Alan Rudolph (*CHOOSE ME*) has crafted.

Rudolph's film is not a pleasant or cheerful one, but so expertly crafted and carefully textured as to capture a mood, a sense of place, the loneliness and alienation of the lost people in Edward Hopper's famous painting of a diner at night. Even the sun that breaks through the clouds at the end can't fully dispel the rain clouds of Rain City, so perfect is the bleakness of the vision offered here.

●●●● Douglas Borton

Kris Kristofferson (left) and Divine in **TROUBLE IN MIND**.



JOURNEY

continued from page 10

suggest the appearance of a darker, more athletic version of Gizmo, the friendly Mogwai in GREMLINS.

Cast and crew hold their breath and the cameras continue to roll as the monkey replaces its mechanical counterpart—even the sound of a clapboard startles the excited beast. But you can hardly blame the monkey for being nervous: Chopper (a pampered dog on-screen, complete with diamond collar and English nanny) tried to eat it earlier in the day.

Even this brief scene reveals the considerable departures Lemorande's screenplay has taken from Verne's novel. Gone are Professor Lindinbrook and his nephew Axel, replaced by the latest incarnations of the adorable adolescents so popular of late. Two brothers played by Paul Carafotes (ALL THE RIGHT MOVES) and Ilan Mitchell-Smith (DANIEL), along with a young English nanny (Nicola Cowper, of DREAMCHILD), accidentally descend beneath the Earth's surface while pursuing their younger sister (Jaclyn-Rose Lester of POLTERGEIST II) through the bowels of an extinct volcano. Later, the inadvertent adventurers will meet eccentric scientist-inventor Nimrod Saknussen (New York comic Emo Phillips in his film debut), who is searching for his grandmother, an aging explorer played by veteran actress Hermione Gingold (GIGI).

"Certain fundamentals of the screenplay are based on Verne, but that's not a Bible," said Lemorande. One element of the novel (and of the first film version made by 20th Century-Fox in 1959) which remains is that the explorers emerge into a hollow interior near the Earth's core. "We have the characters on an inner-surface, walking upside down," said Lemorande, describing a future scene somewhat at variance with accepted scientific theory. Even Verne himself, usually noted for his accuracy, had to resort to dramatic license, as Lemorande pointed out: "The Earth gets hotter as you descend, but Verne has it getting colder. It's all hypothesis, anyway."

After Muckluck's scene, the characters notice some strange writing engraved on a rock. While they pause to discuss this unusual find, their dog is supposed to notice something off-screen. Unfortunately, Chopper seems to be a method actor—he refuses to cooperate unless given some motivation to look in the desired direction. Dog-handler Kim Lindemore tries wagging Chopper's

stuffed alter ego beneath the camera, but that fails.

During a pause in shooting while a solution is sought, the crew resorts to various techniques to amuse themselves: one grip, operating a funnel-shaped wind machine, stuffs Chopper's discarded double into the machine and flips the switch—five pounds of hapless hound blasts straight into the air. Meanwhile, the animal trainers have found an effective method to provoke the required reaction shot from the dog: a live rat, held just off-camera. After several more takes, each of which a salivating Chopper executes perfectly, the dog is led off-screen for a much deserved rest while his fearless foam-filled stunt double steps in for the earthquake. Someone yells to the dog's trainers, "Give him the mouse—he earned it!"

"Earthquake! Rumble!" shouts Rusty Lemorande, and the actors dive for cover—unnecessarily, for the rocks miss their cue. "Cut."

The rocks are in boxes suspended on ropes above the set; pulling the ropes doesn't overturn the boxes but instead shakes them so the rocks fall out randomly rather than all at once. As with the other effects in the film (which include a variety of glass matte paintings by Harrison Ellenshaw and the foreground miniatures and floor effects by John Scheele), Lemorande is trying to capture as much as possible in-camera in order to save time in post-production. On the next take the rocks hit their mark, including one off the head of Nicola Cowper.

"Oh, it didn't hurt—they're nothing," Nicola demurred after the take as she dusted herself off. The avalanche and wind machines have raised so much dust that the air is thick with it, and the cast and most of the crew are beginning to look as if they really have been through the center of the Earth.

Still, despite the elaborate nature of the scene, shooting progresses fairly rapidly: the Louma crane allows for quick changes in camera set-ups, and the lighting design by cinematographer David Watkin (Oscar-winner for OUT OF AFRICA) requires no relighting for close-ups.

And members of the cast manage to maintain their enthusiasm, despite the fact that the script often makes them the target for every horrendous obstacle that Rusty Lemorande can imagine. When asked if he had become an actor in order to have rocks dumped on him, Paul Carafotes was even more cavalier than Nicola: "I don't care if they dump ratshit on me—the checks are good!" □

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ROBOCOP

continued from page 13

The camera will be moving in, following people. There will be hand-held scenes. I plan a very stylized approach but I'm going to disguise it. It'll seem very natural." Vaccano is publicity shy and refuses to give interviews to the press.

Satiric TV commercials in the script separate scenes in the film like the acts of a play. "It's a kind of dark comment," said Verhoeven. "Putting the commercials bluntly between scenes, not showing them on a TV screen is a new approach. You know the painter Mondrian? There's a red square and a blue square and they're separated by black lines. I see the commercials like that. It's like an



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abstract composition for me."

While Verhoeven plans to imbue ROBOCOP with personal, philosophical underpinnings, he also intends not to stint on excitement. "I don't think audiences today will go to a film with only intellectual content," he said. "I think action and intellectual content together make a more interesting and effective work. I would like to show that I can do action scenes as well as they were done in the RAMBO films." The director handled the battle scenes expertly in his Dutch WWII epic SOLDIER OF ORANGE (1977). But Verhoeven isn't making the film for any particular audience. "I make a picture for myself," he said. □

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Moon, This Island Earth, The Invisible Ray, Forbidden Planet, Godzilla, King of the Monsters

HORROR/SF III

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THE RUNNING MAN

continued from page 6

make an interesting mix because **RUNNING MAN** has all the components—violence, stunts, effects—to be commercial, with extra ideas to give it a different edge.”

In many ways Cohen sees Arnold Schwarzenegger as the key to the whole movie. **RUNNING MAN** will show a new side to Schwarzenegger,” said Cohen. “He plays a man of great intelligence who starts out as a policeman but when he won't do what he's asked, i.e. execute some children, he winds up being thrown into prison and into the deadly game. When he realizes he's one of the few people who is willing to tell the truth, he uses the game to hoist his superiors on their own petard and brings the government down with a popular revolution. This film has a tremendous tradition behind it, being firmly rooted in **METROPOLIS**, **THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME**, and even the Italian movie **THE TENTH VICTIM**. Although we hope to make it new, fresh, exciting, and big boxoffice, we know we are drawing on the time-honored traditions of fantasy films where men hunt other men and society is terminally corrupt.”

Stephen King did not write the script for the movie. “A wheelchair manufacturer named George Linder owned the rights and had already written a script in conjunction with some friends of his in the movie business,” said Cohen. “I decided not to use that script but hired Steven DeSouza who had written **48 HOURS** and **COMMANDO**. DeSouza made Arnold seem more special—than say Stallone, in the latter film—mainly because of the humor he injected by playing it astutely like a cartoon. In some ways I wanted the same approach here, a fun movie but a serious subtext if you cared to scratch the surface. I knew Arnold was very happy with **COMMANDO** and as I wanted him to star, I thought it would be politic to use the same writer. It turned out to be a good deal as I signed DeSouza to a two picture deal prior to **COMMANDO**'s opening and his becoming popular. He's writing **THE FLINT-STONES**.”

Originally **RUNNING MAN** was planned to star Christopher Reeve and be directed by George Pan Cosmatos. In fact, it did indeed begin shooting last year—a period which Cohen said, “Was the nightmare of my life. It was the worst experience I've ever had in the business. Cosmatos was the least talented, least cooperative, and the most horrible person I've ever had dealings with. We fired

him after spending \$700,000 on the picture. He committed to make it for \$11 million but when he turned in the final budget it was \$18.6 million. He had a clear case of **RAMBO-itis** and I knew we were in the middle of a disaster. I like Reeve, though, but I wasn't sure if they were the right combination. When I found that Reeve had doubts about Cosmatos too, we terminated the agreement and took a big chance on starting it all over again.”

As a replacement Cohen considered Ferdinand Fairfax, who made **NATE AND HAYS**, as director. Said Cohen, “I wanted a director who would be responsive to the things that needed to be done—someone who could forget **BLADERUNNER** with all its mattes and modelwork and not make it too left or right wing as in the John Milius school of filmmaking.” Though Fairfax was acceptable to Schwarzenegger, according to Cohen, the producer ultimately opted to give the assignment to director Andrew Davis.

Much of **RUNNING MAN** takes place in “The Game Zone,” an urban area that looks like it has been devastated by an earthquake. “Instead of rebuilding, the future authorities just erect a wall to enclose the devastation,” said Cohen. “There is no money available for any other option. We are dealing here with a Los Angeles we can all identify with, but with a twist. I hired Lilly Kilvert as the production designer because she showed great promise with **TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.** and now she has the chance to reinterpret her feelings once again. Having a woman in this key area of design will hopefully redress the overly macho ambience of this type of film. The cinematographer will be Jeffrey L. Kimbell who I started off with my last movie, **THE LEGEND OF BILLIE JEAN**, after he had done commercials for Pepsi and Apple computers. With these two visual collaborators, I think you'll see an L.A. you have never seen before complete with the topsy-turvy inversion which works so well in fantasy movies.

“We also started off with Ron Cobb on the visual effects side but my feeling now is to go for more undeveloped talent,” continued Cohen. “Artwork from 18 year-olds at the London School of Design was better than a lot of what these highly paid conceptualists could come up with. There is an opportunity here for the right person as I think we can all agree on no one topping **BLADERUNNER** in that department.” Shooting on **RUNNING MAN** was scheduled to begin in September. □

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LITTLE SHOP

continued from page 25

puppeteers manipulated its movements which were basically anything a hand could do and even more as the lip, mouth, tongue, head, stem, and the up-and-down movement were complex and far harder to achieve than Billina the hen in *RETURN TO OZ*. The extra time we were given over and above the original shooting schedule meant that we could refine all this and add extra touches like the plant cocking its pod.

"The third Audrey II is the size of a watermelon developing a more belligerent look which I modeled on a piranha fish with its jutting jaw. It is still pretty but you can tell at this point that its beginning to mean business. The fourth was a nightmare because of the lip synching it had to do to 'Feed Me.' At this point in the film you really want people to believe that it has developed a personality, so it comes complete with mechanical leaves and vines, and lip, tongue and stem movement. The tongue here isn't so much like a flower pistil but back to the orchid orifice design while the exteriors are more somber and gruesome. Frank wanted vines developed for lifting and dramatic effect along the lines of Medusa. Twelve additional puppeteers operate this model.

"The fifth stage is for the song 'Suppertime' when it eats Mushnik. Here the plant had to be sturdy enough to eat Vincent Gardenia. The new song 'Mean Green Mother' is the next stage and it is the fastest in the movie, being very similar to 'Purple People Eater.' We had a massive lip construction to keep up with that. This was the biggest build of all. Over 15,000 leaves, a vast number of vines and roots and a massive stem with a head on it about the size of a Volkswagen car which took thirty people to operate. The seventh stage is a surprise."

Conway eschewed the usual

marionnetted tentacles in favor of a self-supporting vine with amazing positive control through the help of the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority at Harewell. "The vine movement you will see in *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* has never been done before," he said. "They had to be thin but fully capable of wrapping around something, dialing on the telephone and using the cash register, stopping on a dime without wobbling. We didn't want to have to resort to support wires like in *20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA*, or out of control compressed channelled air movement as in *THE CRAWLING EYE*. The vines were the first problem we solved as we took them to a certain point, amazing ourselves with what the plant could do, and then we handed it over to the puppeteers and they took it even further. The Harewell experts also helped with core materials.

"They were like kids experimenting," Conway continued. "I didn't tell them it would be hard to do, I just wanted to see what they came up with. I'm most proud of this aspect of the film because nobody will think it was difficult. In context it looks effortless and like it should be happening that way. So effective were the vines that Rick Moranis took to wearing a cricket box [a hardened athletic supporter], just in case!"

As far as the lip-synching of the mechanized plants went, Conway obviously found there was nothing in his, or anybody else's experience, to base it on. "We had to take the existing technology and stretch it even further," he said. "The 3 to 4-inch thick lips on the twelve foot plant for example were massive and to get the shape of the words in time with the music was a nightmare. We had to develop whole new hand and cable controls capable of doing the equivalent of turning a mattress to musical beats.

"We couldn't just follow some-

body's mouth movements as the whole concept was stylized to begin with," continued Conway. "Sitting down in front of a mirror and saying 'Feed me Seymour. Feed me all night long,' and watching the mouth formations wasn't enough. We are getting there, though, as now I can sit in front of the monitor without the music track playing and lip read what the plant is trying to say. What helps too is that all the songs are done in small sections just as they were storyboarded."

Despite all the problems, Conway said the plant designs couldn't have been simplified more. "Frank Oz wanted photosynthesis but I felt that was pushing it . . .," Conway laughed. "We realized very early on that the plant would have to remain as stationary as possible even though the idea is there that it uses its vines to move its room-sized fibreglass pot around. When it was moved it took a day out of the schedule just to move it a foot because of the complexity of the new connections and yet another hole into the floor of the 007 stage's tank.

"I had to meet with production designer Roy Walker to work out all those sort of problems," continued Conway. "What had to be on a rostrum, how much space we needed behind the walls, how much area under the floor, but he was very helpful on this front. Alleyways had to be changed solely to make room for us behind the walls. I felt it was important to get the puppeteers as close to Frank Oz as possible so he could have a dialogue with them without the usual animatronic methods of mike and video link-up contact."

In all, four tons of the finest pure latex was used for the leaves and skins while research and development produced a hide for the largest plant of a material with elastic and compressive properties beyond those of previously used rubber. And more lengths of the specially developed cable to activate the vines and facial expressions were used than that which supports the Brooklyn Bridge. Even though thirty builders worked 24-hour shifts and sometimes fifty puppeteers above the core group of six were needed on the more complex days, Conway said that he has never had so much fun or had a plant breakdown that lasted longer than 15 minutes.

"I've never known a film production like this one," said Conway. "Everybody is excited about the end result and we still play the soundtrack all the time because not one of us has become bored with it. The support from the production office has been unbelievable. They remodeled the work-



Ellen Greene as Audrey in the Warner Bros film, the only member of the stage cast who appears in the movie version.

shop for us and anything we have needed is ours, no question. They even gave us a stage to rehearse on.

"Frank Oz, of course, understands all the problems with his Muppet background," continued Conway. "No other director could have been so understanding. Even he couldn't believe the pitstop mentality I instilled into everybody. If something broke down, everybody was standing by all the time to run in, strip it and sort out the problem, but there was never anything that major. The skins lasted on the plant longer than we thought they would. We had a nightly clean-up which helped where we would wash it down and paint or patch anything that needed it."

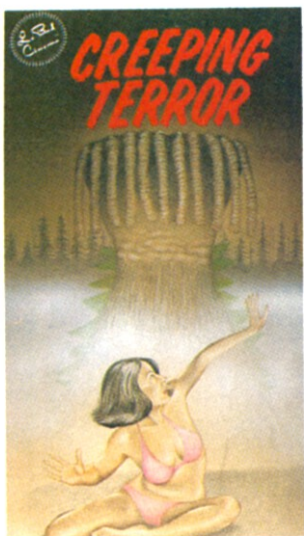
Lyle Conway is being understandably guarded about his work on *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, which many believe to be the best work of his career and a major advancement in the animatronic field. Even David Geffen couldn't get a sneak preview of Audrey II in Conway's little workshop of horrors.

"David didn't want to come into the shop in case he had an anxiety attack, but I told him to come over anyway," said Conway. "If you walk into our studio there is absolutely nothing there that looks remotely like a plant—just miles of unpainted latex, nothing green! He looked terrified, but I assured him it would be okay. And you know something, I know it will be." □

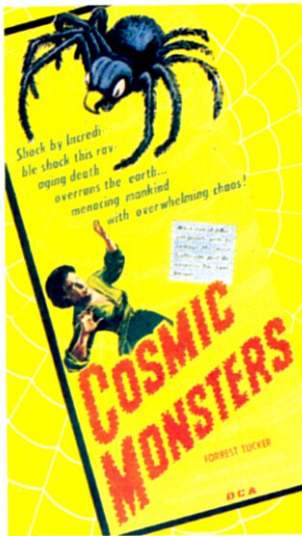
Rick Moranis and Ellen Greene in a sad scene from *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*. For their \$26 million production, Warner Bros has tacked-on a happy ending.



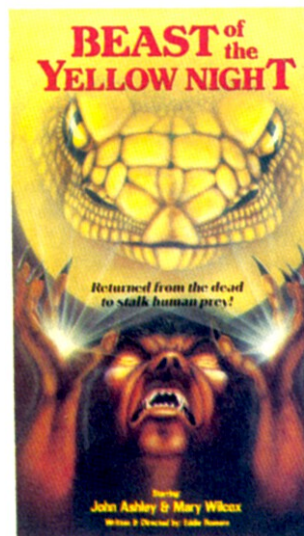
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TROUBLE REVIEW

continued from page 48

shows a gift for comedy and is quite charming as the overblown hero. Gracie (Kim Cattrall) is a lawyer who wants to save innocent Chinese girls from a fate worse than death. She's pushy, nosy, and brave—adding tension and spice as Russell's love/hate interest.

The dialogue and scenes are often quite funny. Hong "camps" it up as the ghostly villain, whining and blustering through his war with the forces of good for possession of the green-eyed girls. When Burton snaps at Lo Pan, "I don't get it," Hong replies, "You are not on this earth to 'get it.'" After the benign Chinese sorcerer Egg Shin gives the heroes a magical potion on their way to battle Lo Pan (and certain death), Wang smiles serenely and says, "I have a very positive attitude about this." Carpenter has also wittily captured some of the nuances of the Bay Area: Gracie's sidekick Margo is an astonished writer for the *Berkeley People's Herald*; as a Berkeley resident familiar with our local journalistic traditions, I had to concede him a bull's eye. And when Burton winces about not having any guns, Egg Shin offers him a long-barreled Magnum and says wryly, "Make you feel like Dirty Harry."

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA is "camp" and entertaining. Unfortunately, the film's also like Chinese food: an hour later you're "hungry" again—for something more substantial. Granted the film is a parody, but it should have some suspense and it doesn't. Scenes occur in a rambling order; many of them could be switched or altered without having much of an effect on the story—and that's a sure symptom that the film is a collection of parts rather than a whole.

In some scenes the actors speak their lines like they're in a hurry to finish. Talking fast is not the way to pace a film. And no matter how fantastic or phantasmagoric a film, the rules of behavior should be consistent—otherwise we're constantly reminded that we're just watching a movie. Wang seems human and vulnerable until he gets into a duel that spoofs Kung Fu films but erodes suspense; the fight becomes pure slapstick, an exercise in excess. When the long-anticipated battle between the sorcerers arrives, it's about as exciting as a 25-watt lightbulb at a laser show. (The magical duel between Vincent Price and Boris Karloff in *THE RAVEN* is much stronger.) And finally, **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA** is uncomfortably derivative of the

Indiana Jones sagas.

But the most disturbing flaw in the film is the way in which the beginning is tied to the ending—or rather, isn't tied. The beginning of the film depicts the good sorcerer in a lawyer's office offering the movie's events as a flashback. It's a neat idea but it doesn't make any sense. At least fifty percent of the film can't be told in that fashion because Egg Shin wasn't even present! And the last scene of the film is shown from an omniscient viewpoint—only the audience can see what's taking place. It's true that the majority of the audience probably forgot the beginning by the time of the ending—but Carpenter shouldn't have! He's insulting the audience and the craft of storytelling. Films are a way of exorcising demons and fleshing out dreams, and the storyteller and the audience have a sacred pact and trust. Carpenter violates that.

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA is amusing and I recommend it for that reason. It stands above the average Hollywood fare—but that's measuring it with a vastly inflated currency. Carpenter needs to keep searching to re-find his *arete*. Here's hoping. □

TROUBLE EFFECTS

continued from page 49

he shook it back and forth, the tongue would whip about crazily. Later, a pair of legs replaced the tongue helmet for the scene when an actor was halfway swallowed by the monster.

The 12-foot long sewer beast rode atop a large tank. Four 8-foot long spindly arms were all wire controlled to enable them to grasp roots and rocks. The crew connected a large tank containing hundreds of pounds of air to a weather balloon located underneath a thin, speckled skin portion of the creature's throat. A quick release valve was mounted to the tank. After the beast swallowed and reared back its head, the balloon was intended to shoot full of air and resemble a bullfrog's expanding throat pouch. During the shoot, an operator forgot to plug it in, so the effect is minimized in the finished film.

For the scene where Thunder, one of Lo-Pan's three Masters of Death, blows up like a balloon, the Creature Shop's talents were stretched to the max. The original storyboards merely outlined cuts from the bloated head to the actors watching it expand. According to Johnson, Carpenter wasn't pleased with the initial transformation so they decided to refilm it. "Once it started inflating it looked great," said Johnson. "But that magic moment when you see Thunder

and something weird starts to happen was lost, since he always looked a little inflated."

George Jenson was called back to re-storyboard the scene and bridge the gap between the real actor's face and the prosthetic inflating head. Jenson designed a logical progression of practical cuts showing Thunder's already-inflating hand reaching for a knife tucked away in his belt. The hand drops the knife which falls next to an expanding prosthetic foot. These two brief shots enabled the film editors to cut back to the model head already in the midst of inflating.

"We sculpted a thin foam rubber mask likeness of actor Carter Wong," explained Johnson. "We equipped it with bladders in certain areas to start off the inflation. The transformation was really a clever feat of conceptual engineering by George [Jenson]. There was a reason for each shot, unlike *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON* where you see feet changing, then hands, then kneecaps, all for the sake of showing some dazzling effects."

The head transformation progressed in three distinct stages. The first stage called for a foam rubber mask worn by actor Carter Wong. When its cheeks widened, the flesh appeared to stretch away from the gums and expose the makeup teeth beneath.

For the second stage, an effects head, the mouth dropped open abnormally wide, eyes bugged out of their sockets, and steam poured from the nose and ears. Stage three finally revealed Thunder's humongous body—big fat stomach with hands and arms blown to the max. The head employed was the same as the previous shot, utilizing another casting with even larger balloons.

When Thunder finally loses

Director John Carpenter.



control and explodes offscreen, mechanical effectsman Joe Unsinn fired shredded clothing and rubber body parts out of an air mortar to represent the popped balloon man. At the start of filming Carpenter had told Boss technicians to try anything, no matter how bizarre. The only restraint lay in keeping things from becoming too bloody. Taking into account this free-wheeling approach and trying to figure out a logical extension to a scene that was illogical to begin with, Johnson hit upon an interesting notion.

"Since the guy's like a big balloon," said Johnson, "why not make his insides look like bright party balloon colors? I took some to show Carpenter on the set and said, 'You're going to think this is ridiculous,' and he yelled: 'Nothing's ridiculous!' So I threw them on the floor and he said: 'That's ridiculous.'" Carpenter also vetoed Johnson's idea to make a head for Thunder which sputtered and whizzed away like a blown-up balloon that's been suddenly released.

Johnson's old-age makeup designs for Lo-Pan (played by James Hong), followed the Dick Smith approach used for David Bowie in *THE HUNGER*. Johnson employed 12 overlapping appliances which included fake eyelids, a foam rubber bald cap, and special material that, when applied to stretched skin, formed natural wrinkles when released. This was Johnson's first standard makeup design for a motion picture, having only supervised monsters throughout his tenure as head of Boss' Creature Shop. The makeup was painstakingly applied up to eight hours each day by Ken Diaz.

To create Lo-Pan's youthful transformation, Johnson devised a solid glowing head and hand. The transparent head, lit from within, made the skull, veins and brain visible underneath. The hand was photographed separately against a bluescreen.

"At first we tried placing lights inside, but the cramped space made them appear too soured," said Johnson. "So we simply lit it from behind with a lamp on a rheostat [dimmer control] and evenly illuminated the entire hand. The effect is similar to cupping your hand over a flashlight, though our skin was much more transparent. We used a hot melt vinyl for the hand and head [the same substance employed in fishing tackle]. It was a mechanized skeleton hand, so the armature and wires appeared as bones and veins."

An unused effect, which sounded absolutely brilliant, involved Lo-Pan's growing gold nail. "People



The Wildman, an anthropoid-like beast built for *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA* by the Boss Film Creature Shop, supervised by Steve Johnson. Above: Kevin Brennan's design concept. Right: The Wildman as seen in the film.

are fed up with stiletto nails being pushed out by cables," said Johnson. "You see it now in every werewolf movie. We made our nail out of plastic and styrofoam with a layer of acetate on top. We painted it flesh color, then added a layer of gold. As it was heated, the top layer would melt and change color. The plastic on top bubbled and created a neat texture, then started to twist into an ugly, misshapened mess—just like an old, curly nail. As the plastic continued to shrink, we pulled the remainder of it beneath the skin. When we reversed the film, you'd see this weird shriveled thing suddenly grow long and beautiful."

Unfortunately, it took all of twelve seconds to melt the nail. But the time allotted for the entire sequence in the film was a mere eight seconds. Boss tried to undercrank the shot at one-third speed in order to make it fit when the rule is usually to overcrank everything to smooth out the rough spots. With undercranking the nail looked too jittery and mechanical for their tastes. The shot was excised and a rotoscoped animation effect of the nail disappearing was substituted in its place.

The very last effects shot in the schedule was the head trick, the youthful transformation of Lo-Pan, supervised by Mark Wilson. Since it afforded more area than the hand, lights were placed inside a dummy of Lo-Pan, later sweetened with animation. According to Johnson, Carpenter ended up liking the head so much he wanted to frame it entirely in closeup. Johnson had to remind him that viewers would never see the hand Lo-Pan was watching if his eyes filled the screen.

Recently, Johnson left the ghouls at The Creature Shop to form his own effects company, XFX. As to why he departed, he said: "It got a bit stifling there and I think that the quality started to suffer a little bit. I was handed job



after job after job, and expected to do every job in town all at once. I didn't get into this business to churn out as much work as was humanly or inhumanly possible. I got into the business to do the best work I could possibly do. It got to be impossible there. Because I had to do so much, all I was doing was directing work rather than getting my hands into it myself. So, it became really frustrating for me." Johnson's company is currently supplying the makeup effects for a new Michael Jackson video, *A SMOOTH CRIMINAL*, said to outdo *THRILLER*.

Several of Johnson's innovative ideas for *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA* never saw the light of a projector lamp. But he said that doesn't bother him. "One thing I liked about working at Boss was the marriage we had with other departments," he admitted. "Each department knew its own capabilities and what the others could do. Another satisfying aspect was John Carpenter's cooperation. He was easy to work with and was always open to a lot of input."

After the harrowing experience of director Brian Gibson's indecisiveness on *POLTERGEIST II*, it probably felt great to work with somebody who knew exactly what they wanted. Except for the fact, in Johnson's case, Carpenter didn't like the colored balloons. "But at least he *knew* he didn't like them," Johnson laughed. □



During filming in Canada, animatronics supervisor Roger Shaw (center) adjusts Kirbi for filming in *HYPERSAPIEN*, while Rosie Marcel as Tavy looks on.

HYPERSAPIEN

continued from page 7

behind Kirbi and out of the camera's eye we were okay." Cindy Pacquette, a Canadian, did most of the walking shots.

Because Kirbi has such a totally alien look, Shaw tried to find some design element that humans could relate to and made the eye mechanisms expressive. "I made the eyelids rotate around the axis of the eye," he said. "And the eyes move in and out like a lens. They also rotate individually by pivoting at a point just behind the axis of an eye, which gives them additional movement." Kirbi's eyes can focus together, but they can also move and focus independently.

Shaw and his crew built seven different mouths for Kirbi. Some enabled the creature to smile, while others allowed it to drink. One of the mouths had a very prominent bottom lip and was used for an expression when the Trilat dematerialized police cars that pursued it into a back alley.

One Kirbi is operated like a hand puppet for close-ups. "That one is pretty heavy," said Shaw. "We usually need supporting rigs

to operate it. It's heavy because it has the most sophisticated eye mechanism."

Shaw's eleven-man crew is headed by Nigel Trevessey. Jean Bolt, a hair and artwork specialist, is responsible for everything that goes on Kirbi and sees that all the backup Kirbis look exactly like the one being filmed. Jes Harris rigged all the sensitive mouth movements for the puppets.

"The success of something like Kirbi comes down to the fine tuning," said Shaw. "You can have all the elements there and if they're put together slightly wrong, nothing works. There's a lot of spaghetti underneath those eye mechanisms which nobody sees, and I don't want anybody to sense it."

The alien's skin is made of foam latex. Blended fox fur was applied to the body, using a very, very thin elastic skin which could wrinkle and stretch for a lifelike appearance.

Kirbi was created in a modular fashion with various mechanical arms, soft-wire arms, loose-limb arms with lockable joints, and cable-operated arms permitting Shaw and his crew to interchange appendages depending on the shot required. The eyes and mouth were usually radio-controlled.

Shaw explained that Kirbi's small stature (about 36 inches) prevented the use of radio control movement of the arms since the size of the servo motors necessary to get the power to move the limbs were too large to hide within the puppet.

Kirbi got high praise from Ricky Paul Goldin, who plays Dirt, the Wyoming teenager who befriends the aliens and their erstwhile friend. "Kirbi is a cross between a teddy bear and a bloodhound," he said. "He's adorable. And as far as I'm concerned he does a better job of acting than I do. In fact, I get more out of Kirbi than some actors I've worked with." □

TRICK OR TREAT

continued from page 8

rend Gillstrom, cast against type as a zealot who is fervently against rock. According to Smith, the heavy metal star was nervous about the role. "He had never done anything like this," said Smith. "The part was very strange anyway, so I let him improvise a lot. What he came up with was much more interesting than the script, anyway."

A brief scene in the film features a very effective demon, dubbed Skeezi, courtesy of makeup artist Kevin Yagher who handled the makeup for *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, PART II*. Everyone seemed to agree that Yager went a little overboard when he designed the monster, who is seen attacking a girl in the back seat of a car.

"We had problems getting good camera angles in the back seat," Smith explained. "The car wasn't sectioned. He was strictly supposed to be a back seat gargoyle. When we were designing him I told Yagher there were going to be two very quick cuts. He got carried away with it."

The creature in question is a rod and cable controlled puppet made of latex. It was built from the waist up, with two long arms which are animated by rods from below. The gargoyle-inspired head has two long pointy ears and yellow eyes worked by cables. The foot-long tongue that protrudes from the mouth is also cable controlled and is almost obscene close up. Four technicians operated the controls to put Skeezi through his paces.

Smith feels the teenage character of Eddie is pivotal to the success of the film. If audiences don't care about Eddie, or if his transition—from nerd to kid with demonic powers to hero trying to destroy what he unleashed—doesn't work, then it won't matter how good or how scary the special effects are. □

ALIENS

continued from page 43

possible by the troopers' "powered armor" or "powered suits." "Suited up, you look like a big steel gorilla, armed with gorilla-sized weapons," says the narrator, describing the contraption. "Two thousand pounds of it, maybe, in full kit..." The suit has feedback which causes it to match *any* motion you make, exactly—but with great force."

Now, it should be noted that in Heinlein's novel, the "drop" is made with each trooper in an individual capsule—while in *ALIENS*, the free-fall drop is made via a large space-plane. Heinlein's Army troopers are engaged in a galaxy-wide war—"The Bug War"—while *ALIENS*' Marines are on an isolated mission. Heinlein's powered armor is standard battle gear; *ALIENS*' Power Loader, donned by Ripley to dispatch the Queen, is intended for cargo loading. And the storyline of *ALIENS* in no way reflects that of Heinlein's book, which is written as the narrator's memoirs.

Of course, coincidences *do* happen, in fact, they happen all the time. Writer David Gerrold has recounted how his first *STAR TREK* script, "The Trouble With Tribbles," was found to contain astonishing and wholly unintentional parallels to another Robert Heinlein work, *The Rolling Stones*. Heinlein, informed of the situation, graciously permitted *STAR TREK* to go ahead with the episode. Ideas are cheap, he reportedly said; it's what you do with them that counts.

He's probably right. Ultimately, what is disturbing about *ALIENS* is not any similarities that may or may not exist between the movie and its predecessor or other works. What's disturbing is how little the talented people behind the movie did with those ideas—and how much has been made of so little. □

Makeup artist Kevin Yagher demonstrates Skeezi, a large cable and rod puppet he created for *TRICK OR TREAT*. Note controlling rod visible on puppet's left arm.



CAPTAIN EO

continued from page 9

breasts, but they let us keep the ornamentation! We made the suit only from the waist up, because when she's hanging from her web, the body fades into black. All the tubes that hang off her body wrap up and attach to the ceiling of the set. We made duplicates of pieces of the set in foam rubber, cast slip rubber or urethane to put it all together."

Once Tom Burman applied the prosthetic makeup, Bari Burman took over to give Huston an alien but seductive vampirish quality. "Bari is a fine beauty makeup artist," said Tom Burman. "She's very good with shadows and pearlescent colors, so a lot of the makeup is in a pearlescent tone."

Though the Burmans were pleased with their work for CAPTAIN EO, they were delighted with Francis Ford Coppola's reaction to their creation. In the midst of an incredible menagerie of aliens and monstrous creatures designed for the film, Coppola stopped everything the moment the Spiderwoman arrived on the set. "Look everybody," he said, "This is a beautiful makeup!" □

HOWARD THE DUCK

continued from page 44

Howard is sucked out of his easy chair by a mysterious force and whisked to earth, where he lands in Cleveland and meets a punk rocker named Beverly Switzer (Lea Thompson). Beverly and Howard hit it off, but otherwise the good people of Cleveland are understandably as repulsed by this unappealing, robotic little character as we in the audience are. The film's big running joke is that Howard is repeatedly accused of being a prankster in a duck costume; considering that he never looks remotely like anything else, the gag provokes embarrassed laughter of a kind the filmmakers presumably didn't intend.

The film's premise is so badly botched that things only start to get interesting when, halfway through, Howard suddenly stops being the main character. The fine actor Jeffrey Jones unexpectedly takes center stage as Dr. Jennings, a scientist slowly and excruciatingly becoming possessed by an evil alien brought to earth during a failed attempt to return Howard home. Jennings' predicament is by far the funniest thing in the movie—the alien growls the only genuinely amusing dialogue.

Huyck the director appears to have had a better grasp on what he was doing than did Huyck the co-screenwriter. He uses rapid cutting and distorted camera angles

to create a comic-book atmosphere that's often effective, especially in a long scene set in a sushi bar. More importantly, he handles his actors surprisingly well; Jeffrey Jones and Lea Thompson make the most of their weak material, and Tim Robbins gives a memorably nutty performance as Phil, a nerdy lab assistant who tries his hardest to help Howard go home to "Duckworld."

Aside from Howard himself (who's not merely unconvincing but also remarkably ugly), the effects work is state-of-the-art. Howard's hurdling flight from his planet to ours is the rare special effects extravaganza that manages to be thrilling and funny at the same time. When Jones undergoes his entirely credible transmogrification from pleasant scientist to hideous monster, it's hard to tell how much is accomplished by his witty acting and how much by the subtle makeup job, which stands as a tribute both to his and the Burman Studios' work. After the alien later manifests itself as a scorpion-like creature, the miniature and the live-action are similarly well integrated. Seldom have special effects been so seamlessly blended into a film.

But the sheer waste of money HOWARD THE DUCK represents is staggering. The Steve Gerber comic on which it is loosely based handled the idea with wit and finesse; the film drowns it in misplaced, heavy-handed Hollywood glitz. Trapped in a world he never made, indeed. □

LABYRINTH

continued from page 42

through the labyrinth without any development. Yet the seeds are there. A throwaway line, in which Hoggle values her jewelry because it's genuine plastic, should have started questioning about the things she so highly desired at home. This theme would be capped by the Junk Lady, a marvelous piece of mythos whose possessions literally weigh her down, but who in this film is, thematically, too little too late.

LABYRINTH differs greatly from THE DARK CRYSTAL, but gets lost just the same. Neither film follows a well-planned path, neither script offers a strong story supported by theme or emotion. Whether protagonists are Shakespearean actors in a character drama or rubber puppets in a fantasy, they and their actions must grip the audience. Those of LABYRINTH fail to do so. And yet it shows that there's still a lot of creativity in the Muppet camp. Maybe in his third fantasy, Henson will find the way. □

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Director Tim Kincaid (r) and his producer wife Cynthia DePaula pose with the Ed French alien monster created for *BREEDERS*, their first video release for Empire.

TYCIN FILMS

continued from page 15

monster's underground lair, where it has created a nest for its victims. Kincaid filmed in a series of catacombs under the Brooklyn Bridge, used by workers who built the structure. There are vast rooms with brick and stone archways, the largest of which is a prayer room used by the men before they went into the depths to work. Kincaid learned of the location from *BREEDER*'s makeup effects man Ed French, who filmed some of C.H.U.D. there.

The monster's victims were to be seen emerging in a pit of translucent slime—actually gelatin. But with the actresses disrobed and emerged, the jello failed to gel. Kincaid was wary of adding the chemicals necessary for fear of harming the girls.

"The art director jumped in a van and headed for the nearest supermarket," said Kincaid. "He brought back ten pounds of flour and we poured it into the pit. It worked, but unfortunately it turned it white and gave the scene these sexual undertones that we never meant for it to have. The girls ended up working in the stuff for four or five hours—until 4 a.m."

MUTANT HUNT, which Kincaid calls "an adventure film with a science fiction background" finds Manhattan in a state of terror as Z, a mad industrialist, alters a squad of cyborgs with a drug known as Euphoron, turning them into crazed killers. The cyborg's original creator is imprisoned by Z, but his sister escapes and seeks the help of Matt Riker, a private operative.

Kincaid directed **MUTANT HUNT** in 15 days, stretching the budget to give it more value and making up the difference by cutting corners on *BREEDERS*, putting that film in the can in only eight days. Ed French again handled the makeup and effects

chores, employing a crew of eight people to work on costumes, robots, mechanical surveillance drones and horrifying sewage worms that play a part in the action. Lasers and other optical effects have delayed the film's video release.

Empire is easily the most prolific distributor of genre films and their tactic of using both theatrical and video markets to release their product should enable them to keep a constant supply of films flowing to the fans. This is fine with Tim Kincaid, who seems to get a genuine joy out of making films, even on restricted budgets. □

THE FLY

continued from page 46

to "plunge into the plasma pool." His jazzed-up exhilaration smacks of a drug-high, or a fanatic's proselytizing for converts to heightened awareness, or the raging god-like perspective that shattered James Mason's equilibrium in Nicholas Ray's **BIGGER THAN LIFE**.

Frightened off by Seth's mania, Veronica returns weeks later to find him a nearly unrecognizable mass of cancerous sores, the former vitality now become doddering decrepitude. Goldblum's typically lucid, ironic manner continues to radiate through the thickening crust of Brundle's transformation, making his irrevocable change all the more ghastly (of obvious relevance is Cronenberg's oft-told account of his father's protracted, painfully aware battle with a rare bone disease). With a child's instinctive delight in the gruesome, Seth exhibits himself to the woman he loves: spewing acid on his food, inviting the girl to examine "Brundle's Museum of Natural History" wherein are preserved the artifacts of a vanquished body.

THE FLY's latter half grimly details the genetic takeover of

Seth's entire being by his tiny, winged nemesis. After three viewings, one can predict audience response: during the "love story" opener, respectful silence; during the mid-point portrayal of Seth's breakdown, troubled and incredulous laughter; during the climactic section, stunned capitulation to Cronenberg's audacity. The decisive shift from uneasy giggles to mute fascination occurs with Veronica's giving birth to a slimy, oversized maggot (the physician in attendance gleefully enacted by the director himself). The implicitly pro-abortion idea of a woman's incubating alien life crystallizes **THE FLY**'s central theme: human vulnerability, both to Nature and Man's Hubris. That the unspeakable birth is "merely" a nightmare does little to dispel our profound unease.

Cronenberg's deliberate use of horror movie clichés, like the "monster's" rooftop flight with heroine in arms or his peering, Quasimodo-like, over warehouse battlements, appears surprising in light of **THE FLY**'s revisionist aspirations. Such touches seem almost congruous, a deliberate nod to the genre's hallowed history. But cineaste affection is hardly the film's dominant concern. Cool and abrasive, its tone partakes of the ominous grandeur in Howard Shore's pointedly Bartok-flavored score. Likewise, Mark Irwin's cinematography is tensely subdued; for the principal set he contrasts the pervasive blues and browns of Seth's lab with an assertive red chair that implacably signals danger.

Chris (GREMLINS) Walas' special effects neatly steal the film's climactic minutes, no mean feat amidst such riveting mayhem! "Brundle-fly's" ultimate appearance is a masterpiece of insect anthropomorphism, a twitching Selenite cross-hatched with **VIDEODROME**'s machine-flesh coils. And Cronenberg wins his gamble: the mutant creature's messy demise feels genuinely tragic. **THE FLY** leaves one nearly bereft of emotion, so relentlessly does Cronenberg pursue the plot's fantastic premise.

Yet on the basis of repeat viewings, the film's peak moment occurs when, before a disbelieving Veronica, Seth Brundle's ear falls off. The incident appalls and amuses all at once, and as Veronica spontaneously takes the stricken hero into her arms (a gesture worthy of the woman's New Testament namesake), audiences emit howls of disavowal and revulsion. A healthy person's loving embrace of one ravaged by disease is apparently for many the most shocking sight of all. □

CORMAN RETROSPECT

continued from page 31

out Mushnik, now a posh Beverly Hills florist due to all the publicity. Mushnik is married to Audrey, with a family of obnoxious kids. Seymour carries a seed pod from Audrey Jr. that hatches into a man-eating plant with his characteristics, the "son" of the title.

"I wanted to open the picture with the same shot," said Griffith, "tilting up from skid row to the new skyline, staying in black and white. When Seymour takes a bus to Beverly Hills the picture changes to color en route. It was to be a completely fantasy Beverly Hills, with Bentley police cars and streets paved with paisley carpets."

Jonathan Haze went on to write **INVASION OF THE STAR CREATURES** featuring Vegetable Men from outer space for himself and Dick Miller. Haze claimed that the script was funny, but he hated the casting and the way Bruno Ve Sota directed it. Haze was line producer on **MEDIUM COOL**, assistant director on John Derek's first film, and was production manager and assistant director on Tom McLaughlin's **THE BORN LOSERS**. He produced Jonathan Kaplan's **11TH VICTIM** and was given a small role in **HEART LIKE A WHEEL**, among other projects.

Mel Welles continues to be busy in voice-over work, doing voices in such films as **THE WOLFEN** and **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**. In 1966 he directed a killer plant movie of his own, **ISLAND OF THE DOOMED** (1968) and

Cast & Credits

An American International Pictures release of a Filmgroup Presentation. 10, 60, 70 mins. *Produced and directed by* Roger Corman. *Screenplay by* Charles Griffith. *Art director,* Daniel Haller. *Director of photography,* Archie Dalzell. *Editor,* Marshall Neilan. *Music,* Fred Katz. *Sound recording,* Phillip Mitchell. *Makeup,* Henry Thomas. *Assistant director,* Richard Dixon. *Props,* Carl Brainard. *Second unit director,* Charles B. Griffith.

Seymour Krelboined . . . Jonathan Haze
Audrey Fulquard . . . Jackie Joseph
Gravis Mushnik . . . Mel Welles
Burton Fouch . . . Dick Miller
Winifred Krelboined . . . Myrtle Vail
Mrs. Shiva . . . Leola Wendorff
Wilbur Force . . . Jack Nicholson
Dr. Phoebus Farb . . . John Shaner
Leonora Clyde . . . Merri Welles
Joe Fink . . . Wally Campo
Frank Stoolie . . . Jack Warford
Mrs. Feuchtwanger . . . Lynn Storey
Waitress . . . Dodie Drake
Hold-up Man . . . Charles Griffith
Drunk . . . Jack Griffith
Tramp . . . Bobbie Coogan
Junior . . . Charles Griffith
Teenage Girls . . . Tammy Windsor
Toby Michaels

Roger Corman released another lamentable directorial effort, *LADY FRANKENSTEIN* (1972).

Dick Miller survived some lean times as an actor and continues to put in character appearances, reprising a different form of his Walter Paisley role in various Joe Dante movies, appearing in soap operas and on the series *FAME*, as well as bits in *V: THE FINAL BATTLE*, *SPACE RAIDERS*, *THE TERMINATOR*, and others.

The sense of creative people given their big break and having fun at it propelled many Corman pictures, but especially *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*. As Haze observed about the film, "It's really shoddy and shabby. But it's also funny and the performances were very good. I think it just had some kind of magical touch to it. It seems that it was enchanted. It will probably last forever." □

ASHMAN

continued from page 23

that are read by the urchins.

"As a kid I went nuts over *THE TINGLER*," said Ashman. "The whole concept was that there is some creature in all of us that tightens around our spines as we grew afraid. That just was the most terrifying thing in the world to me. And when it got loose in the movie theatre and you could see the shadow across the camera that's probably one of my most vivid childhood memories."

He concedes that "a lot of horror films are not scary, they're funny. One thing that appealed to me about *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* is that it isn't a scary movie in any way. It really came out of the *Mad* magazine school of humor, the beatnik humor of the late '50s."

The director felt that the Spector sound suggested the early sixties and gave the play a stylistic reference point in time. By placing

Martin Robinson, who designed Audrey II for the stage version of *LITTLE SHOP*.



his fairy tale "a little bit long ago and far away" Ashman felt it helped the audience accept the story and not ask too many questions that he couldn't answer.

One of the earliest concepts for the play and one which had occurred to the director before he even set pen to paper was the show's surprise ending where the plant eats the theatre. Ashman thought of using vines and tendrils descending from the ceiling to engulf the audience. Although the device can't be used in all situations, it worked at the Orpheum. *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* was designed for small theatres and Ashman readily admitted that it doesn't work in 1500 seat houses where the plant is dwarfed by the auditorium. "The Orpheum is only 300 seats," he said. "It ran for two years at the Comedy in London which is 750 seats. The plant just doesn't have the impact in 1500 seats."

Ellen Greene, who originated the role on stage and recreates it in the new film, embodies the perfect balance of empty-headed sweetness the role demands. "I think Ellen is Audrey the way Carol Channing is Dolly," said Ashman. "The minute she walked in I was impressed. She sang 'Somewhere That's Green' at her audition and it was just the way it sounded in my head. Ellen brought an enormous amount to the character. In fact it was Ellen who contributed that Audrey is a blond. I thought she was a brunette, but Ellen said 'No, no, no. She's got to be a blonde.' We even went wig shopping together."

Ashman felt that Greene had a daffiness about her and a real sweetness which came through in the character. Unlike some women who become very hard or appear cheap when playing the dumb blonde role, Ellen always dealt with Audrey's heart, the same way that Jackie Joseph approached the character in the original film.

Ashman wrote the screenplay for the Warner Bros movie version of the musical. While screenwriters have traditionally been unhappy with the way directors handle their work, Ashman was quite content to leave Frank Oz alone while he completed the film.

"I think Frank Oz has been extremely faithful to the show while transforming it to another medium," said Ashman, who is now looking forward to writing a pair of films for Disney, an animated feature and a live-action musical. "Film is really a director's medium. I decided early on that I wouldn't be involved. I was there during pre-production but as soon as they started filming I was gone." □

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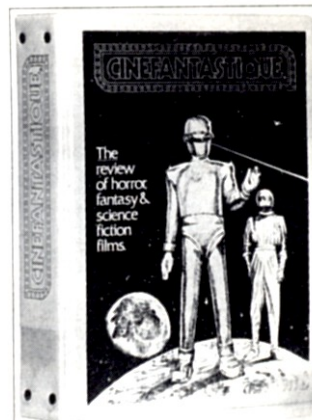
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LETTERS

HERRMANN'S PSYCHO

One wonders how Bernard Herrmann came up with such a brilliant score for *PSYCHO* [16:4/5:49] in only one month. His manuscript is dated, I believe, from Jan. to Feb. 1st, 1960. Unbeknownst to many, the score incorporates a movement from a work Herrmann composed in the '30s, his "Sinfonietta," which he arranged almost literally as the cue entitled "Mad House," which memorably accompanied Bates' chilling, defensive speech about "putting Mother away"—the first clue you get that all is not quite right with this lad. That musical cue, incidentally, contains a famous 3-note phrase—or rather, motif—which became identified with Herrmann, and which he himself evidently preferred to identify with madness itself, as he reused it pointedly in *TAXI DRIVER*, 15 years later. John Williams thereafter borrowed it. I'm sure consciously and deliberately as an homage, for a scene with Darth Vader in *STAR WARS*. ("Sinfonietta," at least read in score, appears to be a wonderful, spooky work—I'd like to see it recorded.)

Craig Reardon
N. Hollywood, CA 91602

ALIENS QUIBBLE

In *ALIENS* [16:4/5:6] we are asked to believe that Ripley is so strong that she can hang on to the rung of a ladder in a depressurizing ship with the mother alien hanging on to her foot, trying to drag her into space—with one arm!! Why did Ripley bother getting into the power loader to fight the alien? If I was that strong I'd have kicked its butt bare-handed.

Brian K. Snyder
Buffalo, NY 14215

VASQUEZ WE WOULD HAVE BELIEVED

I found myself hypnotized by one of the minor characters of *ALIENS*, Private Vasquez, of all people. Whenever she was on screen, I found myself unable to take my eyes off her (must've been those shoulders). Therefore I was very surprised, to see in your cast listing that she was played by a woman named Jenette Goldstein. I had honestly expected her to have a recognizably Hispanic name since she was so convincing as a Hispanic on film. But, here she has a name like Goldstein, definitely

Jewish. So, what I want to ask is, what kind of biographical material do you have on her? Is she Hispanic or not? What other work has she done? Where did she get those shoulders? Owen Hanner
Mundelein, IL 60060

[*ALIENS* was Goldstein's film debut. She was born in Los Angeles and studied drama at the University of Southern California at Santa Barbara, and in New York and London, where she appeared in numerous plays. Besides jazz, modern and folk dancing, and singing (soprano), her interests are listed as bodybuilding, gymnastics, acrobatics, soccer, and baseball. That, at least, explains the shoulders.]

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME...

I've just seen your capsule review of *THE MANHATTAN PROJECT* [16:4/5:115] in the October issue and I wanted to thank you for it.

On the other hand, I can't resist asking if you could shed some light on the criteria which another of your reviewers (Judith P. Harris) applied to the same film to conclude that it was "worthless." Not poor, not mediocre, not exploitative, inept, derivative, childish, venal, disgusting, embarrassing, controversial, or simply disappointing, but totally worthless: lacking any redeeming value whatsoever.

Does that mean: not worth the price of admission? Not worth the cost of production? Not worth the reviewer's time? The audience's? Based on what? Intention? Execution? Script? Performances? Di-

rection? Cinematography? Design? Inventiveness? Imaginativeness? Lack of entertainment value?

Lack of restraint by a writer or reviewer can, I suppose, be excused (or at least explained) by naivete, misplaced passion, or (more probably) simple lack of insight. (There's something frighteningly dismissive and gleefully destructive about the adjective "worthless," especially when it's the only word used to characterize a movie.) However, when such an appellation becomes entrenched as one of the five regular categories of critical evaluation, some of the responsibility clearly resides elsewhere in the magazine, on the editorial level.

I would hope that a magazine devoted to cinema would try and operate on the principle that the truly worthless movie is rare, and that the category would not only be unnecessary, but more to the point—undesirable. Why create a category which reflects poorly on the very source of your material?

Retaining "worthless" as one of the five regular options open to your reviewers encourages its use and contributes, I think, to what is an already dangerously hostile and irresponsible critical environment which is polarizing the audience and polluting an already tainted creative atmosphere in the American cinema.

Marshall Brickman, Director
THE MANHATTAN PROJECT
New York, NY 10023

[*Guilty as charged. We have changed the labels on our ratings system this issue to ones that are less provocative and hopefully more accurate. And thanks, Mar-*

shall, for films like SIMON (1980) and THE MANHATTAN PROJECT. You're one of least recognized talents working in the genre.]

WHAT'S WRONG WITH DUNE?

"There's just something wrong with that movie; I don't know what it is," laments David Lynch of *DUNE* in your most recent issue [16:4/5:4].

If he can't think of anything, the man is too blind to be allowed behind a viewfinder.

First, the special effects are awful. His own self-proclaimed dislike for science fiction is evident in that he ever approved any of those terrible blue-screen shots into the release print. It shows not only his contempt for science fiction, but for his audience as well. What surprises me is that Dino and Raffaella DeLaurentiis let him get away with it. The music, likewise, is egregiously terrible. Toto's twanging guitars in the score generated only laughter in the premier I attended.

There are too many static shots of people's heads with thought balloons over them as they try to explain the plot to themselves, the audience, and the director. I never read the book, and I didn't have any problem understanding the plot. Anybody who's ever seen *STAR TREK* or *STAR WARS* knows what hyperspace is, and what imperial intrigue and interstellar wars and The Force or The Voice, or whatever the hell you want to call it, is all about. "The Worms—The Spice—is there a connection?" Good Christ, you didn't have to be Holmes or Spock or even Thufir Hawat to figure it out.

But the worst thing is the impression I get that Lynch instructed the villains to chew as much scenery as possible, for which I do not fault Kenneth MacMillan, Paul Smith, or Brad Dourif. Terence Stamp's General Zod and Chris Lloyd's Lord Kruga were models of subtlety and restraint, by comparison.

I can tell you what's wrong with *DUNE*, Mr. Lynch: the director!

James Scott
Columbia, SC 29201

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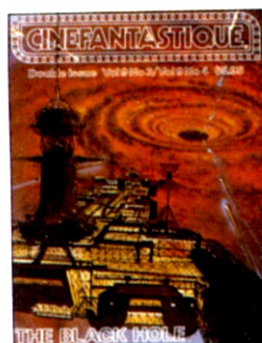
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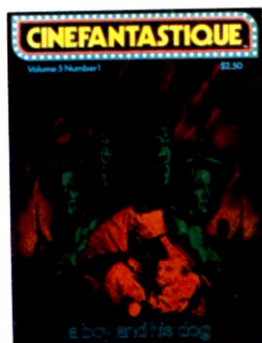
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